

Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into Heaven, August 15, 2020
(Rv. 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Cor. 15: 20-27; Lk. 1:39-56)

We Catholics are accustomed to celebrating the uniqueness of Mary. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8th and this feast form bookends, as it were, of the unique role that Mary plays in the history of salvation. And in fitting fashion God honors that unique role with a unique conclusion: Rather than wait for the final consummation of the world to assume Mary, body and soul, into heaven, God achieves that “new creation” in a moment more proximate to her Dormition, as the early church called it, her falling asleep in the Lord.

Of course, every feast of Mary is a celebration of God’s activity in the world. In fact, these feasts of Mary give us an unobstructed view into what God intends for the world in general. The means by which God acts in the case of Mary is unique, but what he intends for her and for us is the same: Fullness of joy in the kingdom of heaven, complete salvation which leaves nothing unaccomplished, nothing left behind. Even our bodies are destined for glory.

Alice Camille, who often writes reflections for the prayer resource *Give Us This Day*, makes an interesting connection between the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven and the social reality of the world at the time. In 1950, when the doctrine was proclaimed as dogma, the world was still reeling from the effects of the 2nd World War. Between 70 and 80 million people had died, cities were in ruin, and the lives of those who had survived were shattered. The Pope, Pius XII, had experienced the nightmare first-hand. And at that moment, he and the college of bishops raised to the level of dogma this ancient doctrine that affirms that God’s salvation knows no end to its power to restore and bring to fullness of life.

Mary is the first one across the finish line of what God intends for his whole creation. And when we ponder the mystery of God’s action in the life of Mary, we cannot avoid hearing her prophetic call to make that firm intention of God the centerpiece of our belief. From what God has done for her, Mary arrives at the conclusion, that God is doing that for everyone. Her song of praise becomes a prophetic word:

“He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation
He has shown the strength of his arm,
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our ancestors

to Abraham and his children forever.”

This feast gives us hope that all our efforts to restore creation and foster the human community toward the harmony it knew before the Fall, where no one is left out, nothing is expendable, are not doomed to failure, but align with the intention and desire of God himself, who treasures his creation so much that he draws it whole and entire into the kingdom of his Son. What happened to Mary is what God plans for us and for all of creation.

Almost at the very end of the bible, God says “Behold, I make all things new.” He begins with Mary, but he will not stop until we are all caught up in God’s creative and recreative design.