

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary- 2012
Deacon Pat Hall

Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Scriptures at:
<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/081512-mass-during-the-day.cfm>

CCC 966 *“Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.”* (Pius XII)¹ *The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians:*

In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and, by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death. (from the Byzantine liturgy)²

This is what we celebrate today: the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

But our Gospel reading today is about Mary’s visitation of her cousin Elizabeth. Mary had just recently conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and Elizabeth is past her 6-month of pregnancy, she having been barren in her old age.

Tradition speaks of Mary being a teenager at birth and of being a mature woman at her Dormition having spent her older years with the apostle John. We have decades separating these stories. It causes curiosity, because on Easter we hear the Resurrection story and on Christmas we hear the Nativity story. So what are we to make of this today? Why the story of the Visitation on the Solemnity of the Assumption? There must be something connecting them.

There *is* something about the one story that points to the other. Actually, there are several things about the one that points to the other, shared points that a Scripture scholar could expound on in great detail. But there is one thing that caught my attention. Part of that is because of what is happening in my wife Jan’s and my lives.

Last Sunday, my daughter and son-in-law invited us over to their house for a swing set building party. Jan watched over our 2 and 4-year old granddaughters as my son-in-law and I played with power tools and my daughter screwed in a couple

¹ LG 59; cf. Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus* (1950): DS 3903; cf. *Rev* 19:16.

² Byzantine Liturgy, *Troparion*, Feast of the Dormition, August 15th

hundred bolts. But I couldn't tear my attention away from my daughter. You see, she is 8 ¾ months pregnant and it's really hard not to notice...over and over again. Now pregnancy is pretty common. Each one of us was part of that occasion. But our attention is still riveted when we see that miracle in progress.

That's what makes the image of the Visitation so bold in my mind. Here are two women sharing the joy of life, of being part of creation. In fact, they are bringing their whole being, their very bodies, and participating in God's salvation of creation, a new creation.

"The bodies of Elizabeth and Mary serve as vehicles for the advent of God's grace. God the Father, through Jesus, will be bodily manifested and fully present to all people. The body is important, and it is concrete."³

It was God in-breaking into the world, becoming flesh, to be incarnate as a human body, a body that he sacrificed on a cross to save us from our sins.

Jesus, true God and true Man, rose again, body and blood, soul and divinity, to be with us always.

The Blessed Virgin Mary's Dormition, her assumption, body and soul, points to Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension.

She points us to her Son, as he makes himself present to us, body and blood, soul and divinity when we share in His communion today.

When I receive the Blessed Sacrament today, will I be better able to embrace the mystery of receiving his body, a body he received from his mother by the power of the Spirit? Can I imitate this mother's singular devotion to her Son? Such a devotion led that Son to draw his mother to himself, body and soul.

Such gives us witness and hope of the day of our own bodily resurrection and reunion with the one who gave us all.

³ John E. Hingsbergen, *Sunday Homily Helps, August 15, 2012*, Franciscan Media