Dear Friends,

The Feast of the Assumption is one of the most important feasts of our Lady. We Catholics believe in the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. We believe that when her earthly life was finished, Mary was taken up, body and soul, into Heavenly glory, where the Lord exalted her as Queen of Heaven. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 966). It was on November 1, 1950, that, through the Apostolic Constitution Munificentimus Deus, Pope Pius XII officially declared the Assumption as a Dogma of Catholic Faith. The Assumption is the feast of Mary’s total liberation from death and decay, the consequences of original sin. It is also the remembrance of the day when the Church gave official recognition to the centuries-old belief of Christians about the Assumption of their Heavenly Mother.

With the exception of Jesus Christ, who is the Eternal Word, conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, Mary is the greatest person to ever exist. The greatest of us all is a woman. Mary brought a new dignity to every woman who has ever lived and who ever will live. Women bring life into the world and nurture this life. Because Mary sacrificed herself for us, our women bring unique reflections of God into the world and nurture His Image with their bodies and with their lives. In these days when the most lucrative industry in the world is the pornography industry, where mainly young girls are exploited. Mary reminds us of the Dignity and Respect that are the natural rights of every female among us.

In these days of the glorification of the self, Mary reminds us of a person whose body and spirit were created for another. She said “Yes” to the angel Gabriel at the Annunciation and allowed God to radically change her life. She nurtured and cared for the child that others wanted dead. She stood with Him as He was tortured to death to complete the Father’s plan of redemption. She accepted John and us into her heart and became our mother.

In the Magnificat, the song of Mary given in today’s Gospel, Mary acknowledges that “the Almighty has done great things” for her. Besides honoring her as Jesus’ mother, God has blessed her with the gift of bodily Assumption. God, who has “lifted up” His “lowly servant” Mary, lifts up all the lowly, not only because they are faithful, but also because God is faithful to the promise of Divine mercy. Thus, the feast of the Assumption celebrates the mercy of God, or the victory of God’s mercy as expressed in Mary’s Magnificat.

Mary’s Assumption gives us the assurance and hope of our own resurrection and assumption into Heaven on the day of our Last Judgment. It is a sign to us that someday, through God’s grace and our good life, we, too, will join the Blessed Mother in giving glory to God. It points the way for all followers of Christ who imitate Mary’s fidelity and obedience to God’s will.

This feast also gives us the message of total liberation. Jesus tells us in John 8:34 that everyone who sins is a slave of sin, and St. Paul reminds us (Gal 5:1), that, since Christ has set us free, we should be slaves of sin no more. Thus, the Assumption encourages us to work with God to be liberated from the bondage of evil: from impure, unjust and uncharitable thoughts and habits, and from the bonds of jealousy, envy, and hatred. “On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the gift of the Mother, and let us pray to Mary to help us find the right path every day” (Pope Benedict XVI).

Be blessed,
Fr. Tom Kunnel C.O.

August 15, 2021
WORSHIP & MEDITATION

FIRST READING
A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (Rev 12:1)

PSALM
The queen takes her place at your right hand, arrayed in gold. (Ps 45)

SECOND READING
Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Cor 15:20)

GOSPEL
"From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name." (Lk 1:48-49)


WAIT, WATCH, HOPE & LOVE

GOSPEL MEDITATION
Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

They are courageous, wise women who ground us, focus us, and inspire us. They are the good mothers who walk with us and light our way. They teach us life lessons and help us heal and navigate through challenges and difficulties. We need people to point the way. Sometimes, these wise ladies are not our biological mothers but women in our lives, who through their strong and faithful presence, anchor us and remind us that we are loved. We need these women. Human beings do their best when they have cheerleaders in their lives. They show us that even when facing despair there is always a brighter tomorrow.

Jesus needed his mother. She had to be that faithful anchor, that guiding presence, in his life. Jesus needed to be affirmed and encouraged just like any other human being and Mary had to be there, right by his side, doing precisely that. Even when her heart was pierced as he was nailed to a tree, she did not give up hope. Most certainly, she continued to wait, watch, hope, and love until he took his final breath. That’s what mothers do. Even when their heart breaks, they persevere.

Today, our Blessed Mother is our cheerleader once again. Taken up to heaven in body and soul, she points to and directs us toward our final destiny. Life eternal awaits! Any disappointment, fear, or anxiety can be set aside as she gently reassures us of God’s love and promise. Always a mother filled with grace and hope, she calls us to reaffirm our faith in God and in the gifts we have each been given. We can persevere and do what we need to do to live life well, with faith, hope, and love as our guiding lights. Knowing who we are and who we will one day become helps us to better chart the course and direction of our earthly lives. Looking to the example of our Blessed Mother, we receive the assurance we need.
The first reading, Revelation 11:19a;

This end-time description of the birth and triumph of the Messiah and the vanquishing of evil is replete with biblical and extra-biblical images. Today's passage opens with the ark in the holy of holies visible to all, indicative of an exceptional revelation (v19). Three figures dominate this narrative: the woman, her child, and the dragon. The woman is the historical Israel, who brings forth the Messiah (v5) and in the new era becomes the church (v6). Her initial appearance resembles that of goddesses in antiquity with some possible biblical allusions in the sun, moon, and stars (Gen 37:9f). The role of Zion in ushering in the final era is depicted as a childbirth (Is 66:7ff), one not without the anguish beforehand that was to precede the end (v2). Following the birth of the Messiah, Israel, now become church, goes to an idyllic desert place, reminiscent of the exodus, to be protected by God during the time of persecution. The period of time (1,250 days or three and a half years) is one half of the perfect number seven, symbolic of evil or a time of duress (v6; 11:2).

The child is Christ the Messiah destined for universal sovereignty (Ps 2:9); he is presented here in a rapid passage from birth to glorification (v5.).

The dragon, identified in the chapter as the devil and Satan (v9), is the mythological sea monster, symbolic of the forces of evil (Ps 74:13f; Job 26:12). The horns recall the beast of Daniel (v3; Dan 7:7f) as does the sweeping action of the tail in dislodging the stars (Dan 8:10).

At the end of the eschatological battle (vv7ff), salvation is acclaimed with the full inauguration of the sovereignty of God and Christ, both spoken of equally in Revelation as sharers in authority and recipients of worship (v10; 7:15ff; 22:3).

The second reading, 1 Cor 15:20-27

In today's reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks of the final resurrection of the just (vv20 - 23) and the subjection of all the forces of evil to the sovereignty of God (vv24ff, 28). The three Pauline personifications-Christ, Adam, and death-reappear here as the dramatis personae (vv20, 22, 26; Rom 5:12 - 20). Christians are bonded with each of these: with Adam in the order of nature, with Christ in grace, and with death in nature and grace.

In his resurrection, Christ rises as the prototype of all those united with him in the Spirit. Firstfruits (v20): the offering of the first harvest fruits to God symbolized the offering of the whole. Thus Christ stands for all of his followers. By reason of their union with Adam, all humans are affected by his sin and its consequences (Rom 5:12ff), so too those bound to Christ will share in his victory over death at the time of his coming (v22, Rom 5:18). This will follow the sequence which Paul has elsewhere described: Christ, then those who have died, and those alive at his coming (v23; 1 Thes 4:15ff).

GOSPEL INSIGHTS — Lk 1:39-56

The song that Luke puts in Mary's mouth when she visits Elizabeth speaks of a God who “has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places.” Mary herself is a prime example of the lowly raised to high places: a poor and simple girl, a virgin from an insignificant part of the world, raised to the status of Mother of God, and today “raised body and soul to the glory of heaven.”

There is an attractiveness about God raising the lowly that makes it pleasing for us to accept, at least theoretically. We react positively to the raising of a Mother Theresa from the status of lowly servant of the hopeless to that of Nobel Peace Prize winner. We are less attracted to the idea of God deposing the mighty from their thrones, especially if we live in the “First World” and in the country that boasts of being first in the world.

Mary said: “The hungry he has given every good thing, while the rich he has sent empty away.” This should come as good news to the poor, and should be of some concern to affluent Americans, who belong to the richest five percent of the world’s population.

Let the entire body of the faithful pour forth persevering prayer to the Mother of God and Mother of men. Let them implore that she who aided the beginnings of the Church by her prayers may now, exalted as she is in heaven above all the saints and angels, intercede with her Son in the fellowship of all the saints.

Vatican II, Constitution on the Church, #69.

“Mary’s is a revolutionary prayer, the song of a faith-filled young woman conscious of her limits, yet confident in God’s mercy. … When God touches the heart of a young man or woman, they become capable of doing tremendous things. The “great things” that the Almighty accomplished in the life of Mary speak also to our own journey in life, which is not a meaningless meandering, but a pilgrimage that, for all its uncertainties and sufferings, can find its fulfillment in God. … Like the young Mary, you can allow your life to become a means for making the world a better place.”

Pope Francis - World Youth Day 2017
The lowliness of Mary appears even in liturgical choice of the readings for the Feast of the Assumption. Of the six readings only one of them treats of Mary personally, and even there a fair portion of the visitation scene is dedicated to an early Christian hymn. It is interesting to note how seriously the evangelists take the sentiments which Mary expresses in not singling her out because of personal prerogatives. She always appears in some direct relationship to her Son and his mission. Thus, as today we direct our attention to Mary and our heavenly home, she gives us an important lesson for the journey. And the readings chosen do illuminate her role in salvation history. She is the new ark of the covenant, the bearer of God, and in the litany dedicated to her she is still invoked by that title. She is also the woman of Revelation—if not by the author’s intent, then by free adaptation. She is the one who brought the Savior to the world and engaged herself in the final battle against the dragon of sin. And on this mid-August feast, she is the woman who, with Paul, points to the end of time, the resurrection and the final engagement in God. For her salvation has been finalized. We are still on the way.

As Christians look at Mary, it is her profound self-effacement, her authentic lowliness that comes to the fore. In a power-hungry and ambitious world where people are forever forgetful that within a century they will be a name on a tombstone, Mary is a constant reminder that the standards of the world do not last. But God’s will does, and that goes well beyond the grave. The short Lucan gospel read at the vigil Mass speaks volumes about the real Mary, even though her name never appears. She heard the word of God and kept it.

**QUIZ TIME**

1. When is the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated?
   a) August 1st  b) August 15th  c) September 8th  d) August 22nd

2. What do we celebrate on the feast of the Assumption of Mary?
   a) Mary being taken both body and soul by the power of God into heaven
   b) Mary saying “yes” when she was asked to be the Mother of Jesus
   c) Mary being born without sin
   d) Mary’s death and burial

3. When Mary’s time on earth was done, her body did not see the decay or corruption of death but was taken straight to heaven.
   a) True  b) False

4. We find the actual story of Mary’s Assumption in the Bible.
   a) True  b) False

5. What did Jesus promise would happen at His Second Coming?
   a) Mary will return to earth
   b) Our bodies and souls will be reunited
   c) Mary will be crowned Queen of Heaven
   d) Mary will assume into heaven

6. The feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a holy day of obligation.
   a) True  b) False

7. Unlike Mary, when we die our bodies ________.
   a) Will live forever
   b) Reunite with our souls
   c) Go straight to heaven
   d) Will be buried and stay on the earth.

8. Our souls are spirits that ________.
   a) Die when our bodies die
   b) Will live forever
   c) Turn into angels when we die
   d) Are buried with our bodies.

9. Mary is now in heaven complete with both her body and her soul.
   a) True  b) False

10. Pope Pius XII officially declared the Assumption as a Dogma of Catholic Faith.
    a) 1920  b) 1940  c) 1950  d) 1960

**Quaternion**

1. One of the images in the first reading speaks of the ark of the covenant. Compare Mary with this image.

2. ‘Christ will bring those who “belong” to him to life.’ How do you show you ‘belong to Christ’?

3. How is the babe leaping in the womb of Elizabeth in the presence of Jesus in Mary’s womb like a “leap for all humankind”? Do you treat life as precious? Explain.