

**Echoing God's Word
in the
Catholic Community
Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
August 15, 2024**

SCRIPTURES:

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

A woman clothed with the sun.
Christ, the first to rise
He has raised up the lowly.

BIBLE BACKGROUND:

Luke:

Luke has a unique way of presenting the message of salvation. These two women, Mary and Elizabeth, are the prophets of what God wants to accomplish in the birth of John the Baptist and in the birth of Jesus. They spell out what God has in mind for all humanity. The story is told not in actions but in emotion, in blessing, and in song. That is the way that prophets speak. They illustrate what God wants to convey in their own feelings, their song of praise, and the blessings that will occur to all who follow them. Prophets live out in their own lives the things that God wants to do for all who are God's followers.

The women are filled with the Spirit of God. So, they speak for God. That's what prophets do, don't they? They interpret what God is doing in their lives. They point to what God intends to do for all who will come now.

These two women are bound to one another in the works that God has called them to do. To be the mother of the Savior and to be the mother of his precursor are roles that will bring all humans to the glory that is in God. "That the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Who are we that have received this Lord in our own lives? God's promise that life would reign forever on earth has come to be fulfilled in the lives of these two and of the people who come after them.

The theme of joy prevails in all these accounts. That is the way God works in life: joy is the hallmark of God's presence. The men born of these women will each die a tragic death, one by beheading, the other by crucifixion. But all this will bring only joy to the world! What appears to be a rejection by God turns out to be the triumphant reign of God's power.

The death of these two men will bring joy to the world. In their dying, God finds a way to bring happiness and life to those who follow them. Where there is joy, God's works can be found. "My spirit finds joy in God my Savior." The babies "leap for joy" that God has done such marvelous things for God's people.

Isaiah always found jubilation in the things that God would do for the people of Israel. When people return to Jerusalem after their exile in Babylon, nothing but jubilation awaits them. "Those whom God has ransomed will return and enter Zion singing, crowned with everlasting joy. They will meet with joy and gladness; sorrow and mourning will flee" (Is 51:11).

Mary's "Magnificat" is the most wonderful poem that the Christian community has ever drawn up. So, early in their history, Christians began to sing the words that Luke puts on Mary's mouth. A reversal will take place. The rich and the poor will trade places. What a lowly servant Mary is. So it is with all who believe in Jesus. But they will overcome all the powers of Rome and every other empire that will arise after them!

The proud and those who stuff their mouths with food will know that the humble ones will be their masters, and the hungry will have more than enough! Jesus will preach what we call

the Beatitudes. Perhaps we have not all caught on to the meaning of what God can do for the people who are true to Jesus!

Revelation:

When the Final Trumpet of the Book of Revelation is sounded, the world will know that the reign of God has begun. The first sign of God's reign will be the appearance of the Son of God on earth. The woman who relates to all the elements of creation can be interpreted in two ways: She is Israel who will produce a Messiah, and she is Mary, the Mother of the Savior. In any case, she can be persecuted but her Son cannot. She flees into the desert, while the Son has power to overcome all the powers that the world can direct against him. Israel will be persecuted and relegated to the desert, but the Son that Israel will give cannot be conquered. Mary has been shown by the Church to be that "daughter of Israel" who will bring all things into fulfillment.

Corinthians:

Paul teaches a parallel between Adam, the first human, and Christ, the first-born-of-all who has been raised to life. Death came through the first; life everlasting comes through the second. By his resurrection, Christ brings life to all who accept him. Mary may be the "Second Eve." By her consent to be the mother of the Messiah, she offers the gift of life with God to all who come after her.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can you identify with your body? Do you love the body that God has given you? Do you sometimes wish you had a different body? Slimmer, more athletic, more handsome or prettier? (If we took better care of our bodies, we might better identify with it!) Do you see that God has given you a charge to take better care of who you are, body and soul?

2. What can the Assumption teach us about what God wants us to do with the life that has been given us? Is our early life valuable to God also? Do you see God rewarding us for what we do with our bodies? Does human sexuality also fit in with what God has designed us to be? Are you proud of your maleness or your femaleness?

3. God takes our human lives seriously! The body is not just some poor place where we dwell until we can get to heaven! How can the Church help us to honor our bodies and our souls together more effectively? Can baptism and marriage be explained more fully to make holy what God has made? Can you hold more effectively holy what God has made holy?

PRAYER

Today, the Virgin Mother of God was taken up into heaven to be the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection, and a sign of hope and comfort for your people on their pilgrim way. You would not allow decay to touch her body, for she had given birth to your Son, the Lord of all life, in the glory of the incarnation.

In our joy, we sing to your glory!

Preface of the Mass for the Assumption

CATHOLIC DOCTRINE:

Why don't Catholics believe in reincarnation? Did we have another body, perhaps of a different gender, in a previous existence? What if I recall some experience that may have happened to me before I was even born in this life?

The body and the soul of a person are so intimately united that they will be reunited to one another at the end of time. In our sacramental way of looking at reality, Catholics believe that body and soul go together, not just for this life but for all eternity.

Catholics believe in the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We hold in faith that God honored the body of the Virgin with exaltation in heaven when she had come to the end of her life on earth. She was taken into heaven, body and soul.

In 1950, Pope Pius XII defined as Catholic Doctrine the belief that Mary was assumed into heaven. The pope was careful on the question of whether Mary had died or not. Since there was unresolved controversy on the question of her death, he said, "(W)hen the course of her earthly life was finished, (she) was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death."

The Assumption calls us to believe that Mary already is a unique person in heaven, in body and in soul. The two belong together. You and I also will be united, body and soul, in heaven at the end of time. You and I are just as we are and always will be.

The human body is so precious in our eyes that God will always keep us connected with the body we have been given in this world. The body shares with the soul in who we are and what we do. The body needs to be honored by God who has destined us for eternal happiness. If we take our human life seriously, we will also want our bodies to be honored by ourselves and by others.

As we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we become aware that we are celebrating ourselves, the very being that God has given us. The body and the soul need to be honored and venerated.

Catechism of the Catholic Church #955, 974, 988-1004

© 2017 Rev. Clement D. Thibodeau. All rights reserved.