

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Church of the Assumption
Homily by Most Rev. Felipe J. Estévez
August 15, 2015

Revelations 11:19A; 12:1-6A, 10AB
1 Corinthians 15:20-27B
Luke 1:39-56

Saint John Paul II said that Mary is at the center of the pilgrimage of faith. From the moment of her own conception, she was preserved from original sin, she is the immaculate. This outstanding privilege had a purpose completely unknown to her; she was to conceive as a virgin, the Son of God. That is the first miracle: she is paradoxically Virgin – (and) Mother.

Her pilgrimage took a mysterious turn, she was led for more than 30 years to a life of silence, prayer, work with her son in little Nazareth.

She intercedes to Him at Cana and asks them to do what He tells them. She intercedes and evangelizes. And she stands with him at the Passion. She joins the 12 in the coming of the Spirit.

Now she is the mother of the disciples of her beloved Son. She stays with the beloved disciple, keeping in her heart the memories of her Son and reaches her finale in a glorious reencounter with the Lord of glory.

Today, the universal Church: orbe et Urbis celebrates this finale, the glorious Assumption of our Lady (west), her holy Dormition, (East) there is an inner logic, the immaculate could not experience the corruption of the human flesh, her whole being is transfigured by the glorious Son—today, today we are another generation who calls her blessed, for he who is mighty has done great things for me. (Lk 1, 48)

1. Mary and the Church

Mary who sees you sees the Church. A saint once said that all what it is said of Mary can be said of the Church and can be said of each individual Christian.

As St. Augustin taught before she was the mother of God she was a believer. Her faith is far more outstanding than her privilege of being the woman who gave flesh to the eternal Word of the Father:

“So that's why Mary too is blessed, because she heard the word of God and kept it. She kept truth safe in her mind even better than she kept flesh safe in her womb. Christ is truth, Christ is flesh; Christ as truth was in Mary's mind, Christ as flesh in Mary's womb; that which is in the mind is greater than what is carried in the womb”

We just heard the text from the book of Revelation, the woman and the dragon. A most mysterious piece of Scripture, rich in symbolisms. The message is about the Church; the new people of God, who gives birth to Jesus in the midst of persecution, hostility (just look what are happening in the Middle East today or our own situation as hostile secularism pushes the people of faith to the margins of society as if believers cannot be active citizens with their values)

There is a most beautiful woman, her vestments are wonderful and celestial, she is over the moon, she is perpetually young as the woman of the Song of Songs, with a twelve stars crown—she represents the Church in the glorious condition. Living in the eternity of God, and the crowning of the hope of the pilgrim people of God who has made it and enjoys salvation forever!

But then there is another phase, a phase of pain and sorrow. She is giving birth in pain. Help, she cries.

She represents the Church, Church in the struggle, and Church in the glorious outcome. And there is the dragon. He is destructive. His mania is envy, to be like God. And persecutes the woman with vengeance. The dragon seeks to destroy the baby. The son baby in his birth. Death tries to overcome life. But the woman succeeds in giving birth, a son who is a shepherd. This Son is Jesus Christ who overcomes death and is full of life, life in abundance. The Woman is Mary and is the Church who gives us the Eucharistic Lord, the new manna, the bread of life.

2. Mary and the joy of service

The Gospel relates the haste with which Mary goes to accompany Elizabeth. Both women are pregnant.

And Mary is recognized by Elizabeth as the who is “blessed are you who believed” and as the “mother of my Lord!” Mary’s commitment to serve is shown not only by her haste but by the fact she “she remained three months” away from her home. When she calls herself a “lowly servant”, she indeed has witnessed her capacity of caring.

In the beauty of the encounter of these two women, one representing the old covenant mother of the last of the prophets (Elizabeth) and the new covenant (Mary), Mary praises God; my soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord!” Mary’s prayer is essentially one of praise. It is the recognition of God’s doing in her life. It is noticing God’s ways, i.e. the poor, the little ones, are elevated whereas the proud are put in their place. Mary praises a faithful God, a God who is true to His promises of mercy and love.

St. John Paul II in commenting Mary’s Magnificat in the Encyclical the Church of the Eucharist, the great Pope interprets this song in the light of the Mass, and says: Let your life be a magnificat...

In this glorious feast of the Assumption I invite each one of you to say: let my life be a magnificat...with Mary...recognizing the tender love of my God in my own

poverty...exploring anew how he trusts that I can do great, I can as a member of the living Church give birth to Christ in the world!

A Wisconsin woman named Jessica Powers, a consecrated woman, a Carmelite nun who took the name of Miriam of the Holy Spirit wrote a poem which I would call it the Assumption but the author called it: the Song of Distance.

Little One, come I will teach you the song of distance

Whereby to flee this peacelessness and din

Turn from the earth as stranger and begin:

My soul is out on paths that have no ending

And no return. Where the noon kneels to pray

Love guides my steps, ascending and descending.

Out through the sleeping solitudes I stray

O far

O far away

Morning and evening do not mark this day.

O Little One, believe that earth is alien

Let its concerns all unremembered lie

Say to the storm or sweetness passing by:

My soul is out on paths that have no ending

And no return. A light blurs out my way

I am with God and toward my godhood tending

I near the foothills of eternal day

O far

O far away

God speaks to me. Earth has no more to say.

Let your life be a magnificat with Mary!