

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Day) B/2015

The readings of this feast focus on the Assumption of the Blessed Mother Mary into heaven. They show that, like Jesus in the glory of heaven, Mary has been prepared by God to reign in heaven with her body and soul. They invite us to rejoice in anticipation of the joy that awaits us in heaven.

In the first reading of the book of Revelation, John describes a vision he had when God's temple in heaven was opened to him. In that vision he saw the Ark of the Covenant present in the temple.

The Ark of the Covenant, indeed, contained the tablets of the Law. In the Jewish popular imagination, it was believed that what the law contained was the word that God himself wrote with his own finger in the form of Ten Commandments he gave to Israel. In that perspective, the Ark of the Covenant was seen as the personification of God's presence in the midst of his people.

When such a vision is interpreted in the light of the life of Mary and with regard to the meaning of the Ark of the Covenant, Mary is seen, then, as the ark of the New Covenant and the dwelling place of the word of God, Jesus. As the ark of the old Covenant contained God's word in the form of tablets, so Mary bore in her womb the Word of God, Jesus. In that sense, the Ark of the Covenant that is seen in heaven symbolizes Mary who is in the glory of heaven.

Such an interpretation is made possible by what follows in the vision as it speaks of a woman who had a child and wailed in loud pain as she labored to give birth to a son, who is undoubtedly the Messiah who was destined to rule all the nations of the earth. If the son is the Messiah; then, the mother of the Messiah is Mary.

In the vision, the woman is clothed with the sun, crowned with stars, and standing on the moon. In popular imagination we know that the moon has been often associated with cycle of the woman.

What is unique in the vision, however, is that instead of having the moon standing over the woman, she rather stands over the moon. It means that her time of trial is over. Now is the time of triumph and glory. Like the moon that is lighted by the sun, the woman is clothed in the radiance of the child she gave birth to, the son of God. She put on the Christ she mothered. With all this, the symbolism in the vision becomes clear.

The woman refers, first, to the Jewish people from whom Christ came into the world, because according to the words of Jesus, salvation comes from the Jews. But the woman is also their Jewish daughter, Mary, who gave birth to the savior. And so, the woman in the sky is the Blessed virgin, Mary, Mother of God. With such an interpretation, we can easily walk from the Jewish people to Mary and from Mary to the Church. Mary is the Mother of the Church which was founded by Jesus her son on the twelve apostles, represented by the twelve stars.

Anytime the church grows by welcoming new members, these can count on Mary as their mother. Mary, who is in the glory of heaven where God has prepared her a place, represents the triumphant Church that has already won victory over the devil, the red dragon. We who are still on earth await eagerly to join her and rejoice with her and her Son for our eternal salvation.

In the light of all this approach, it becomes clear that the Assumption is the feast of the glorification of the Mother of our Savior in the splendor of her son Jesus in heaven. The feast of the Assumption sheds light on the personality of Mary in her relationship to God and to her Son, Jesus. It is also an open window on the life of Mary and her significance for the life of the church. It equally clarifies the particular role she plays in salvation history as the Mother of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

As St Paul said in the second reading, just as we were all involved in the sin of Adam and death, because of our common origin with him, so are we involved in the victory of Christ in whom we are made new creatures by his resurrection from the dead. And Mary is in proper order, as the mother of the savior, the first to be seated next to her son in heaven. That is why the feast of the Assumption is a day of joy for what God has done for Mary, a human being like us, by receiving her in the glory of heaven, with body and soul.

This is a big consolation for each one of us to know that, like Mary, at the end of our pilgrimage on earth, we will be received in God's home to rejoice with him forever. Mary herself is aware of the privilege she has received from God when she says, "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.... From this day all generations will call me blessed, for the almighty has done great things for me".

In the Assumption of Mary, we have the assurance that in God's home there is room even for the body. Through it, we celebrate the truth that the resurrection is not only about the soul, but also the body. If so, we have to believe that on the day of the resurrection, we will appear entirely as we are before the throne of God, with our bodies transformed. Then, we will see with our own eyes the truth of what we celebrate today in the Assumption of Mary.

The Assumption Feast teaches us that, because Mary is with God in the glory of heaven, she is also close to each one of us. She has been the mother of Jesus and our mother during her days on earth. That role remains permanent throughout history. That is why we can turn to her in prayer and ask her to intercede for us and for our needs. May God bless you all!

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



Homily Date: August 15, 2015

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Document Name: 20120815homily.pdf