

**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
NINETEENTH SUNDAY ORDINARY TIME (C)**

10 – 11 AUGUST 2019

SUNDAY REFLECTION

It seems to come as a great surprise every time a survey on Mass attendance is conducted that figures are falling. As with any social change among Christians, the causes are complex. However, one constant note is the desire for greater intimacy in liturgy. This is strange as many people find the sense of community in Pentecostal 'worship services' more intimate than the setting of the Eucharist. This is strange precisely because there can hardly be a more intimate setting than being gathered around a table (the altar).

But most celebrations of the Eucharist are still plagued by the legacy of centuries of incomprehension by virtually everyone present which led to a dichotomy between meaning and symbol. On the one hand there was the activity of the priest seen in terms of a perfect sacrifice towards God with people simply present; on the other, there was 'taking communion' which was the fact of obtaining the ultimate spiritual commodity by those who were fit and worthy to receive it.

That the Eucharist was an intimate activity of thanking the Father in union with Jesus while the community was transformed into Christ in His sacred meal was lost sight of almost entirely in practice and catechesis. But if the Eucharist is not normally intimate, then it somehow fails to take into account the nature of the incarnation; and sadly, Christians seek ritual intimacy elsewhere. So trim back on words, and put the energy into creating a real table fellowship. Then in the intimacy, and the concomitant informality, of being actually at a table, breaking up a loaf and sharing it with one another, drinking from a single cup passed from one to another, see if people can reflect on what Jesus has called them to share without the leader having to supply words.

STEWARDSHIP: Am I waiting for the "right" time to become a good steward? So I plan to share my time and talents "later?" Today's Gospel warns those who are procrastinating about stewardship to be prepared - "at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."



ASSUMPTION REFLECTION

Mary the dawn, Christ the perfect day!
Mary the gate, Christ the heavenly way!
Mary the root, Christ the gracious vine!

Mary the grape, Christ the sacred wine!
Mary the wheat, Christ the living bread!
Mary the font, Christ the cleansing flood!
Mary the cup, Christ the saving blood!
Mary the mother, Christ the mother's son.
By all things blest while endless ages run.
(From the Irish)

READINGS FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY 15 AUG '19

Rv. 11:19; 12:1-6, 10: The woman, representing Mary, is adorned with the sun and crowned with stars.

1 Cor. 15:20-27: The resurrection of the dead comes from Christ, the first to rise.

Lk. 1:39-56: Mary, blessed of all women, rejoices in the great things God has done for her.

STEWARDSHIP: "After Jesus, it is the Blessed Virgin Mary who by her example most perfectly teaches the meaning of discipleship and stewardship ... She was called and gifted by God; she responded generously, creatively and prudently; she understood her divinely assigned role as 'handmaid' in terms of service and fidelity." (Us Bishops' pastoral letter, *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*)

SCHEDULE OF MASSES FOR THE SOLEMNITY THURSDAY 15 AUGUST 6:30 A.M. 8:30 A.M. 12 NOON 7:00 P.M.

READINGS FOR THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY 18 AUG '19

Jer. 38:4-6, 8-10: People resisted the uncomfortable truths spoken by Jeremiah and threw him into an empty well. He was rescued, not by someone of his own faith, but by a man, like him, who was prepared to speak out for what was right.

Heb. 12:1-4: Inspired by the saints who have gone before us, and especially by the sacrifice of Jesus, we persevere in the living out of our faith, however much people may oppose us.

Lk. 12:49-53: Before he could baptize the world with the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit, Jesus knew He must undergo the ordeal of crucifixion. In people's responses to Him, many a household will be divided.

INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST:

Families, Schools of Human Growth. That families, through their life of prayer and love, become ever more clearly "schools of true human growth."

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION

This week, Thursday to be precise, August 15, Catholics around the world mark the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, commemorating the end of her earthly life and assumption into Heaven.

But while the feast day is a relatively new one, the history of the holiday – and the mystery behind it – has its roots in the earliest centuries of Christian belief.

The Assumption helps us to understand more fully not just her life, but it helps us to always focus our gaze to Eternity. In assessing the logic of the Assumption we see the culmination of Mary's life.

What does Catholicism teach about the assumption of Mary? And why is this event reflected on in the Fourth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary? Consider a few key points from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (refer to #966).

First, in discussing the assumption, the *Catechism* affirms that Mary did not suffer from original sin but was conceived full of grace. According to this doctrine, known as the Immaculate Conception, God's supernatural life dwelt in Mary from the very beginning of her existence. It is important to emphasize that from a Catholic perspective, the Immaculate Conception is not simply about Mary. This doctrine, which has its roots in early Christianity, ultimately is about the mystery of Jesus Christ. God became man in Mary's womb. Since Jesus truly is the all-holy God, the Second Person of the Trinity, Catholics believe He is worthy to dwell in a pure vessel, a holy temple. Thus, it is fitting that God would prepare Mary as an immaculate dwelling place, full of grace and not stained by sin, for the God-man. The annunciation scene in Luke's Gospel may at least point in this direction. The angel Gabriel greets Mary, "Hail, full of grace." The Greek word in Luke's Gospel for "full of grace" (Lk. 1:28) is in a perfect passive participle form, which would indicate that Mary already has been filled with God's saving grace, even before Jesus was conceived in her womb. The Immaculate Conception will serve as a basis for understanding Mary's assumption.

Second, the *Catechism* teaches that Mary was taken to heaven when the course of her earthly life was finished. The Church does not declare whether Mary died and then was assumed into heaven or whether she was assumed before she died. It leaves open both possibilities. However, the majority of theologians and saints throughout the centuries have affirmed that Mary did experience death – not as a penalty for sin but in conformity to her Son, who willingly experienced death on our behalf. In support of this latter view, Pope St. John Paul II said, "The Mother is not superior to the Son who underwent death, giving it a new meaning and changing it into a means of salvation."

Third, the *Catechism* affirms that Mary was taken body and soul into heavenly glory right at the end of her earthly life. One of the consequences of original sin is the corruption of the body (CCC,400; Gen. 3:19). If Mary was full of grace and did not suffer from original sin, it is fitting that she, like her Son, would not experience such bodily corruption.

Although there are no explicit proof texts in Scripture for Mary's assumption, some biblical themes may at least shed light on this doctrine. For example, the notion of being taken up into heaven has some precedent in Scripture. Enoch was taken into heaven without seeing death (Heb. 11:5), and Elijah was whisked into heaven by the chariots of fire at the end of his life (2 Kg. 2:11). If God could assume these righteous men of the Old Testament, it is certainly possible that Jesus could assume His own mother as well.

Even more, since the Bible presents Mary as the first Christian disciple, it is fitting that she would be the first to receive the blessings of following Christ. In the New Testament, Mary is presented as the first to hear God's word and accept it at the annunciation (Lk. 1:38, 45). She responds to God's word promptly by going in haste to help Elizabeth. She also describes herself as a servant of the Lord (Lk. 1:38, 48).

Mary remains faithful to her son, following Him even to the cross (Jn. 19:25-27), where she experiences the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy at the Presentation: "A sword will pierce through your own soul also" (Lk. 2:35). She perseveres in faith throughout her life. She gathers with the apostles for prayer even after her Son's ascension (Acts 1:14). Thus, the New Testament presents a clear portrait of Mary as the first and preeminent disciple of Christ, who hears the word of God and keeps it in her heart.

Since one of the blessings promised to all faithful disciples is victory over death, it is fitting that Mary, who is the first and model disciple of Christ, would be the first to receive this blessing. Catholics thus believe that the privilege of resurrection promised to all faithful Christians was given first to Mary and in a totally unique way.

While the rest of us hope to have our bodies raised to glory at the end of time, Mary experienced the resurrection and glorification of her body at the moment her earthly life ended. Thus, her assumption – which flows from her unique participation in Christ's victory as the mother of the Savior and as the first and most faithful of Christ's followers – anticipates to some degree our own share in the fullness of that victory if we persevere as followers of Christ.

The dogma of the Assumption of Mary – also called the "Dormition of Mary" in the Eastern Churches – has its roots in the early centuries of the Church. The Catholic Church teaches that when Mary ended her earthly life, God assumed her, body and soul into heaven.

This belief traces its roots back to the earliest years of the Church. While a site outside of Jerusalem was recognized as the tomb of Mary, the earliest Christians maintained that no one was there.

According to St. John of Damascus, in the 5th century, at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, Roman Emperor Marcian requested the body of Mary, Mother of God. St. Juvenal, who was Bishop of Jerusalem replied "that Mary died in the presence of all the Apostles, but that her tomb, when opened upon the request of St. Thomas, was found empty; therefore the Apostles concluded that the body was taken up to heaven," the saint recorded.

By the 8th century, around the time of Pope Adrian, the Church began to change its terminology, renaming the feast day of the Memorial of Mary to the Assumption of Mary.

The belief in the Assumption of Mary was a widely-held tradition, and a frequent meditation in the writings of saints throughout the centuries. However, it was not officially defined until 1950 when Pope Pius XII made an infallible, ex-cathedra statement in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* officially defining the dogma of the Assumption.

"By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the

Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory," the pope wrote. Within the decree, which was passed beforehand to dioceses around the world, Pope Pius XII surveys centuries of Christian thought and the writings of a number of saints on the Assumption of Mary.

We have throughout the history of the Church an almost universal attestation of this Christian tradition's testimony to Mary's Assumption. There exists a thread that runs throughout the whole of the history of the Church in support of the dogma.

That's significant because it supports the tradition of the Church, but it also supports a coming to a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Church of how we rely upon the reflections of some of the greatest minds of our Church. What's also notable about the dogma is the use of the passive tense, which emphasizes that Mary did not ascend into heaven on her own power, as Christ did, but was raised into heaven by God's grace.

PRAYERS

Prayer to Mary Assumed into Heaven

O Blessed Virgin Mary,
united to the victorious Christ in heaven,
you are the image and first-flowering of the Church
as she is to be perfected in the world to come.
You shine forth as a sign of sure hope and solace
for the pilgrim People of God.
In your Assumption,
you manifest the fullness of redemption
and appear as the spotless image of the Church
responding in joy
to the invitation of the Bridegroom, your Son,
who is the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.
Grant that we may follow your example on earth
thereby imitating your Son as well
and being enabled to share your glory,
with Him for all eternity.

PASTOR'S UP-COMING SCHEDULE

Saturday 10 Aug	8:30 a.m. Mass			
	Memorial Mass	Lorri Ann Ferraro		
	Confessions	1:30 – 4:30 p.m.		
	Vigil Mass of 19 th Sunday	5:00 p.m.		
Sunday 11 Aug	Masses 19 th Sunday			
	7:00 a.m.	8:30 a.m.	11:30 a.m.	Brig 7:50 p.m.

Monday 12 Aug Pastor's Day Off
 10:00 a.m. Mass PCRS Faculty Retreat
 Brig 7:50 p.m.

Tuesday 13 Aug Mass 8:30 a.m.
 10:00 a.m. Mass Willow Creek
 Mass St. Brides Correctional Facility 5:30 p.m. --

Wednesday 14 Aug Mass 6:30 a.m.
 Confessions 7:00 – 8:30 a.m.
 Mass 8:30 a.m.
 Mass Indian Creek Correctional Facility 6:00 p.m.

Thursday 15 Aug **Solemnity of the Assumption**
Mass 6:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 12 Noon 7:00 p.m.

Friday 16 Aug Mass 8:30 a.m.
Quiet Adoration & Reflection 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Saturday 17 Aug Mass 8:30 a.m.
 Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
 Vigil Mass 20th Sunday 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 18 Aug 20th Sunday
 Masses 7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. Brig 7:50 p.m.

