



Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 16th August 2020 - Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady

1 Relax & Remember

Set aside 10 -15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. **Call to mind the love that God has for you. Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present.** Then read the Gospel, preferably aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.



2 Read

The Gospel for Sunday 16th August 2020 - Mary's Visit to Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56)

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? From the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

And Mary said: 'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy - according to the promise he made to our ancestors - of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

3 Reflect

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

The core of this gospel reading is Mary's canticle of thanksgiving for God's gifts to her. It is, however, fitting that, on the Feast of the bodily Assumption of Mary, it should begin with her bodily attention to the bodily needs of her elderly relative. With her own baby on the way, she would have plenty of other priorities, making her long journey a real act of kindness. Her canticle, sung daily in the liturgy of Evening Prayer, sums up God's faithfulness to his promises, focussed on his gifts to this simple peasant girl. It combines a wonderful sense of the holiness of God with warmth of gratitude, showing the thoughts that revolved constantly in Mary's mind. As is fitting in the mouth of a girl whose only knowledge of books was the Bible, Mary's song is a texture of scriptural phrases. We cannot assume that Luke wrote it down at Mary's dictation, for putting words in the mouth of his characters is a feature of Luke the historian; but it must reflect her thinking. If any theme resounds again and again throughout the Bible, it is God's care for the poor, for the simple and for those in need. It is this which sets the Hebraeo-Christian tradition apart from the ways of the world.

What was Mary thinking as she walked to Elizabeth's home and back again? How may we in our daily lives show gratitude and give praise to God?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

4 Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Then thank God for any insight you may have received. Conclude by asking God to bless you with one of the following spiritual gifts to help you act on any resolution you have made: love, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, self control, patience, or joy. Please remember to pray for the Church and particularly our school families. **Then conclude by requesting the prayers of Our Lady & St Joseph.**



WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of Sunday 16th August 2020



First Reading: *The Woman Robed with the Sun*

Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6.10

The sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and the ark of the covenant could be seen inside it. Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red dragon which had seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. Its tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and dropped them to the earth, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was having the child, so that he could eat it as soon as it was born from its mother. The woman brought a male child into the world, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had made a place of safety ready. Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Victory and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ.'

This vision of the Woman giving birth and of the huge red Dragon is bewilderingly rich in biblical symbolism. The context of the Book of Revelation is the struggle between the Church and the demands of Roman paganism, particularly the demand that all should worship the Emperor as God. The purpose of Revelation is to reassure the faithful of victory, despite the threat of martyrdom. The Woman represents Israel, the people of God, who gives birth to a son, the true ruler of the universe. The Dragon, of great sagacity and immense power, is the Roman Empire. The Son is unhesitatingly whipped up to heaven, frustrating the evil Dragon of its prey and issuing immediately in the hymn of triumph. The perspective is, of course, foreshortened, omitting the details of Christ's earthly life, to show the certainty of the Son's triumph. Secondly, tradition sees in the Woman the earthly mother of the Saviour, Mary, mother of Jesus and mother of the Church, who triumphs over all the powers of evil. The secondary symbolism, therefore, is that Mary is the great sign in heaven of triumph over evil. Evil has no hold on Mary, and her children are sure of victory.

What does this reading have to say to us about Mary?

Second Reading: *Christ, First-born from the Dead*

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order: Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death, for everything is to be put under his feet.

“Mary goes ahead of us all and leads the way.”

On the Festival of the Assumption of Mary it is important to get things in the right order. Christ is the first-born from the dead. In him all will be brought to life, but all in their proper order. Mary is the first after her Son, and raised by her Son because she is part of his Body, the Church. The perfection of the Mother of the Saviour is won for her by her Son. He draws her after him in his retinue. In this chapter Paul is teaching about bodily resurrection. This is not merely immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the whole person, an animated body, not a soul hidden in a body. Bodily resurrection is particularly fitting when we consider Mary, the physical mother of Jesus, who gave to him her genes, her personality, her features and her talents. If any son takes after his mother physically, it must have been Jesus. The declaration by the Church of the Assumption of Mary is an assertion of the saving value of all our activity, the healing touch, the conquest of pain, exhaustion, moodiness and physical temptation in all its forms. That is why Mary goes ahead of us all and leads the way to full resurrection.

Jesus got both his genes and his training from Mary. So what would it have been like to meet her? How would you explain to someone the Church's teaching on the Resurrection and how this connects with our teaching on the Assumption?

The Wednesday Word: *Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God*

w: www.wednesdayword.org

e: info@wednesdayword.org