

Feast of the Assumption of Mary, celebrating the faith of Christians that God took her body as well as her spirit into heaven when she died.

First Reading: Revelation 11:19a, 12:1-10 (*A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet*)

Responsorial Psalm 45 "The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold"

Second Reading: I Corinthians 15:20-27 (*Christ has been raised from the dead, the promise that all will be raised*)

Gospel: Luke 1:39-56 (*Mary's Magnificat*)

♪♪ Happy are they who believe that the promise of the Lord will be fulfilled. ♪♪

Those words are based on what Elizabeth said to Mary in today's Gospel

They are an invitation to us to believe the promise given to us through our Baptism, no matter where we are on our journey of faith.

I remember the flood that baptized Middleburgh in 2011. I had moved to Mill lane in 1995, because I believed God's promise that I would be sustained in the new ministry the Lord had called me to do. The water and mud was 5 feet deep in my house - and I have not yet been able to move back in, but the Lord has sustained the ministry Sr. Anna and I began together in ways that continue to amaze us.

Today is the feast of the Assumption - officially proclaimed as a doctrine in 1950 by Pope Pius XII. I was 5 years old, and for anyone under 60 it is ancient history. Christians believed that Mary was taken into heaven body and soul as early as the 5th century. The Eastern churches call it the "dormition" or Mary falling asleep. In the 21st century this feast is a sign of hope and a call to all of us to let Mary teach us wisdom, teach us love.

Because she believed the promise of the Lord, Mary received a gift, answered a call and is a sign of God's promise. We see it both in her prayer and in this feast, which is really about the Church as much as it is about Mary. In the book of Revelation we see a dynamic vision of "a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." Today we might even call it a video. She wails aloud in pain as she labors to give birth. The words apply first of all to the church of that time, persecuted and struggling to give birth to Christ in a hostile world. It was later applied to Mary, the one whom Francis calls "The Virgin made Church," who is described by the Preface of today's Mass as "the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection."

But it's not just about the Church in the abstract, it's about us, whenever two or three are gathered in the name of Christ. The second reading makes it clear that it's about the promise made to us. All will be made alive in Christ, but each in order. Mary is not only our Mother, she is our elder sister. Her Assumption, the raising of her *body* into heaven, is a result of the resurrection of Jesus and a prophesy of the resurrection of our bodies, our victory over the final enemy, death itself.

In the Gospel for the Vigil of the Assumption a woman says, "Blest is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you!" and Jesus answers "Rather, blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

In another Gospel, Jesus says, "Who are my sisters and brothers, who is my mother? The one who hears the word of God and keeps it is sister and brother and mother to me."

We are all called by this feast not only to remember and honor Mary, but to imitate her faith and love and hope. We are given the gift of being able to give birth to Christ in our world by the way we live and the way we care for each other. As both St. Francis and St. Clare write, we are all called to be mother and sister and brother to Christ.

Mary answered the call to become the mother of Jesus, she continued to answer the call to be a disciple of Christ while he lived on earth, and she became a partner with the apostles when she was baptized in the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

We have been given the same gift Mary received through our Baptism.

This gift of God is a call from God to imitate the prayer and the life of Mary. She is a woman of compassion, a channel of the Mercy of God. She was not afraid to speak the truth, or to live it. She knew what it felt like to be a refugee from Herod, an unwed mother in a stable, the mother of a victim of the death penalty on Calvary, so the poor have adopted her as their own champion.

We are called **to be merciful as God is merciful**, both in our personal lives and in our communal choices. We are called **to speak the truth to power**, that God is the source of all authority, and to the powerful, that they too will die and that their choices, like our own, can be for life or for death.. We are called **to lift up the poor and to feed the hungry** according to our own resources and gifts.

Carl Jung wrote about the dogma of the Assumption shortly after it was proclaimed. It was not long after World War II, and the power of the Atom bomb was on everyone's mind. It was the time of the cold war and fear of nuclear destruction was in the air. He sees the timing of this doctrine in relationship to that time, a time when humanity was becoming conscious that we had the power to destroy the earth. His understanding of the message proclaimed by it rings as true today as it did in the 1950's. "Immense power of destruction is given into our hands, and the question is whether we can resist the will to use it, and can temper our will with the spirit of love and wisdom."

We are all called by this feast not only to remember and honor Mary, but to imitate her faith and love and hope. We are given the gift of being able to give birth to Christ in our world by the way we live and the way we care for each other. This great power includes great responsibility. We are given the ability to respond both to the state of the world and the situation of the Church. We are called to use the power given by technology and science to heal the world, to make war a thing of the past, to find better ways to promote life rather than to destroy it. We are called to discover new ways of growing food and creating energy which can be sustained without destroying the air and the water and the soil.

In the Church, we have more and more opportunities to live our baptismal call. We are becoming more and more conscious that we are the body of Christ. As we take more responsibility for our future, let us open our hearts to the grace offered to us in this Eucharist so we may, as the opening prayer says, follow Mary's example in reflecting God's holiness, love and wisdom, and join in her hymn of endless life and praise.

The "Magnificat" (Luke 1:46-55)

**My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior,
For you have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**

*From this day all generations will call me blessed:
The Almighty has done great things for me,
And holy is your Name.*

**You have mercy on those who fear you
in every generation.
You have shown the strength of your arm,
You have scattered the proud in their conceit.**

*You have cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and have lifted up the lowly.
You have filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich you have sent away empty.*

**You have come to the help of your servant Israel
for you have remembered your promise of mercy.
The promise you made to our forbears,
to Abraham and his children forever.**

This prayer was so radical and prophetic that in the 1980's you could be imprisoned if you prayed it in public in some countries in Central America. The oppressive military and political leaders easily saw themselves in the *mighty who would be cast down, and the rich who would be sent away empty.*

This prayer can also be sung to the tune of "Amazing Grace."

♪ **My soul proclaims the Lord my God. My Spirit sings God's praise,
Who looks on me, and lifts me up, that gladness fills my days.** ♪

♪ **God fills the hungry with good things, and sends the rich away;
The promise made to Abraham is filled to endless day.** ♪

Psalm 142

With all my voice I cry to you, Lord,
with all my voice I entreat you, Lord.
I pour out my trouble before you;
I tell you all my distress
while my spirit faints within me.
But you, O Lord, know my path.

On the way where I shall walk
they have hidden a snare to entrap me.
Look on right and see:
there is no one who takes my part.
I have no means of escape,
not one who cares for my soul.

I cry to you, O Lord.
I have said; "You are my refuge,
all I have in the land of the living."
Listen, then, to my cry
for I am in the depths of distress.

Rescue me from those who pursue me
for they are stronger than I.
bring my soul out of this prison
and then I shall praise you name.
Around me the just will assemble
because of your goodness to me.