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Monday 15 August 2022

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Reflection by Mary Coloe

Introduction

In the resurrected body of Jesus, we glimpse with the eyes of faith, the resurrected future that lies ahead for all of us. In Mary we are given the promise of our own future.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the Word of the Father.
Lord, have mercy.

You are our glory and our hope.
Christ, have mercy.

You were born of Mary.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading

Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6,10

The imagery from the Book of Revelation does need decoding for us – as we are not Jews living 2000 years ago. The woman represents all humanity, while the dragon is an image of the cosmic evil that all humans need to struggle against; and in it all is the protective hand of God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 44(45):10-12, 16

The queen stands at your right hand arrayed in gold.

The Psalm, which may originally have been a song at a wedding, was chosen because of its imagery, which Christians have applied to Mary.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

What has happened to Jesus will happen for us. We are assured of ongoing life in God

Gospel Reading

Luke 1:39-56

Mary's great song of praise is considered by some oppressive regimes to be too dangerous, and it has been banned, as it is a song proclaiming God's care for the little ones.

Reflection

Today's feast can be hard to make sense of at one level – that Jesus' mother is bodily taken into the life of God (heaven); but at the level of the human heart, it makes a great deal of sense. Thus, for centuries, it was taken for granted that Mary's mortal body did not undergo corruption, perhaps based on the lack of a grave for this remarkable woman, coupled with the sense of filial love. Eventually, in 1950 Pope Pius XII declared this ancient tradition as a doctrine of the church, only the second infallible declaration by a Pope. To make theological sense of this decree we need to focus on Jesus, and his bodily resurrection, and what this then means for all human beings.

In the resurrected body of Jesus, we glimpse with the eyes of faith, the resurrected future that lies ahead for all of us. While for us, such bodily resurrection seems to be a process which first entails the normal corruption of the material body, for Jesus, raised from the grave, his body did not undergo such corruption. Paul says that what happened to Jesus is like the first fruits of a harvest, it is a pledge of what is to follow for everyone. In August, as Spring approaches in Australia, already some trees are showing signs of first fruits – the blossoms are beginning to bud, small figs are already appearing – these indicate that change is happening and that soon the full flowering will follow. In this chapter of his letter to the Corinthians Paul uses a number of images to try to affirm for this community the reality of resurrection – even though he cannot precisely explain the resurrected body.

Turning to the dramatic vision of the apocalypse – we have the strange vision of a woman about to give birth and of a cosmic dragon waiting to devour her child. This is the reading we have every year for the Assumption. It is both striking and terrifying. But what is it about? Who is the woman? What is the dragon?

Given its place in the liturgy on the Feast of the Assumption, the usual suggestion is that the woman is Mary, the child is Jesus, and the dragon must be Satan. But let's look closer. In the preceding chapter the monstrous dragon is described – 'The great dragon was thrown down, that *ancient serpent*, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth' (Rev 12:9). This imagery recalls the Garden of Eden story when the ancient serpent tempts Adam and Eve to disobey, and thus the serpent deceives them with a false promise. So, this image takes us back to the great cosmic story of the struggle between humanity and evil – a struggle that continues for all those born of woman. The woman now on earth, is the archetypical human woman giving birth to her children – born into a world where there is evil that could devour them - the evil of drugs, of corruption in business, politics and yes, even the Church, of lust for money, of seeking power whatever the cost...

While church tradition has seen this image of the woman clothed with the sun and stars as Mary – the mother of Jesus, I think it makes more sense to think of her simply as woman/mother of humanity. In this scene her child **is** snatched violently – but not by the Ancient Serpent – but by God - God has entered the cosmic struggle against evil, and God has prevailed. Meanwhile the woman flees into a wilderness where she finds protection and nourishment. Like the Israelites escaping from Egypt into the wilderness, she too finds food and water in the wilderness.

The gospel account of Mary's Visitation provides us with some insight into the place Mary held in the early church. Placed on Mary's lips is a song of praise modelled on ancient prayers of her Jewish foremothers. First Elizabeth greets Mary with words recalling Jael and Judith:

Most blessed of women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite,
of tent-dwelling women most blessed (Judges 5:24).

Then Uzziah said to her (Judith),

'O daughter, you are blessed by the Most High God
above all other women on earth; and blessed be the Lord God,
who created the heavens and the earth (Judith 13:18).

Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, similarly, recalls the song of Hannah when she is granted a child, Samuel. In this way, Mary is linked with the great women of Israel who were chosen to be saviours of their people. Her song prefigures the ministry of Jesus to the poor and the outcast.

The readings thus present Mary as a woman within her tradition, a woman of faithful Israel, whose fidelity to Jesus models and prefigures the vocation of all believers. In her complete self-giving to God's will and her intimate relationship with Jesus, she is gifted with the immediate consequences of his resurrection. Like Jesus, she moves through death, to life with God without bodily corruption. In Mary we are given the promise of our own future.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As Mary was raised body and soul to glory, we as pilgrims, bring our prayers with her to God our Father.

Petitions

We pray that the leaders of our Church, clergy, lay and religious, will be strengthened to follow the discipleship of Mary as they lead us through the Plenary Council and the Synod on Synodality.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders throughout the world: that they will respect women and the precious nature of motherhood in their own nations.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for women preparing for the birth of their child: that like Elizabeth, they have the help and support they need.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering from illness. May they be strengthened in their difficulties; may those who care for them be full of love and compassion.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for comfort upon all who are dying and those who care for them. May they have the hope and inner strength that they need and may the prayers of Mary, our Mother, will be with them all.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Once she had accepted her role, Mary trusted that God would provide for all her needs and we also trust that these needs will be answered as we make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, her son.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOVNG	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S1	S&S2
Among all		8					
Arrayed in gold							335
Blessed are they						173	
Canticle of Mary (Kreutz)				604/605			
Canticle of Mary (Murray/Gelineau)				606	214		
Canticle of Mary (Joncas)				635			
Hail Blessed Virgin, full of grace				699			
Hail, Holy Queen Enthroned Above					409		
Hail Mary: gentle woman							336
Hail, Queen of heav'n			547	702	408		
Holy is his name						95	
Holy Virgin, by God's decree				714	410		
I Am the Bread of Life	49		204	718	509		
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you			549	723	416		
Joy to you, O Virgin Mary				729			
Mary crowned with living light				742			
My soul rejoices			250		212		
My spirit sings					412		
Now sing my soul 'How Great the Lord'				754			
O Holy Mary	141				413		
Salve Regina			546	801	406		
Sing of Mary, pure and lowly (Verse 4)				808			
Sing we of the Blessed Mother (Verse 4)					417		
Tell out, my soul			550		213		
The ark which God has sanctified					438		
There is nothing told			548		418		

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Mass during the day

Psalm 44: *The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.*

	CWB	JOBC	JOFB	LPC	PM
Psalm 44	466	pg. 111	pg.66	pg. 100	36

Music selections by Michael Mangan

O queen of all (SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional, Gifts]

My spirit sings (CWBII, FWS/SYJ) *Based on Lk 1:46-55* [Gathering, Gifts, Communion, Recessional]

Mary's song of praise (DOM) *Based on Lk 1:46-55* [Gathering, Gifts, Communion, Recessional]