



A GLIMPSE OF OUR DESTINY

LUKE 1:39-56

Teofilo Polacco's ceiling fresco of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Chiesa di Santa Maria Assunta, Riva del Garda, Italy

We know the story of Mary of Nazareth. We know the indispensable role she played in God's plan for humanity, how she made it possible. Christians have honoured Mary from the Church's earliest days.

So many feasts have been established in her honour, so many church buildings named for her, so many religious congregations called after her. Mary has been given so many titles – Mother of God, Mother of the Church, Madonna, Queen of Heaven, Mother of Perpetual Help, Immaculate Conception – the list goes on.

Today we celebrate one of the great Marian feasts. The doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was promulgated by Pope Pius XII in 1950. It declares that Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory". This teaching is an acknowledgement of Mary's singular role in the story of salvation. It is also a promise – that if we follow the example of Mary, if we seek always to say "yes" to God as she did, then we too can look forward to life in God's presence for ever. ■

REFLECT

Henri Nouwen was a Dutch priest and academic who taught at Yale and Harvard universities in the 1970s and 80s. He was well known for his books on spirituality and for his reflections on his mental health struggles. After her defeat in the 2016 US presidential election, Hillary Clinton says she turned to one of his books, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, for comfort in her grief. Nouwen's wisdom has been a gift to many.

But even though he had gained tremendous success as a writer and academic, Nouwen began to feel that something was missing in his life. He sensed that God was calling him in a different direction. Having prayed about it, he finally found himself joining the L'Arche community, a charity that cares for those with intellectual and developmental needs. Henri Nouwen, this deep-thinking writer and professor,

this world-renowned spiritual guru, spent his final years bathing those who could not bathe themselves, feeding those who could not feed themselves, celebrating the sacraments with them, and seeing in them the beautiful face of Christ.

Like Mary the mother of Jesus, Henri Nouwen listened to God at work in his life and responded to it to the best of his ability. He heard the word of God and kept it. Nouwen felt a profound connection to Mary's simplicity and humanity. In one of his journals, he describes meeting a priest who summed up Mary's meaning to the world: "To look at Mary," the priest said, "is to see God's original plan for humanity." "In her," Nouwen wrote, "we see the way God wanted us to be... Mary shows us how to receive the marvellous gift of God's love, and how to respond to God's redemptive action in our lives." ■

This is what we celebrate on the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. If Mary shows us "God's original plan for humanity", so does her assumption into heaven. In the assumption, preserved for ever before the face of God, freed from the corruption of the grave, Mary not only fulfils her destiny – but also offers us a glimpse of our destiny, too. Assumption is what God wants for us. Heaven is what God dreams for us. This is God's desire and design for us.

Today's feast reminds us of that promise – and that hope. We are called to model ourselves on the Mother of God – in her holiness, humility and humanity. If we want to reach heaven, if we are to claim our destiny, we must "listen to the word of God and keep it". That means, very simply, to live like Mary; to desire, like her, to bring the Word into the world; to birth Jesus every day, by all we say and do. ■

SAY

"Lord, thank you for giving me Mary as my mother and model. Help me to follow her example so that I may share in her son's resurrection. Amen."

PRAY

Many of us grew up in homes where the Rosary was said every day. Pray the Rosary today, focusing especially on Mary's glorious assumption into heaven.

LEARN

On the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate our belief that the mother of Jesus was taken up, body and soul, into heaven, where she enjoys eternal life in the company of her son. It is a joyful feast because it points to what we believe will be our destiny. We believe that what God has done for Mary, God will do for us also – that at the end of time God will raise our mortal bodies and bring us into the fullness of God's presence for ever.

DO

Rejoice in good news.

Heaven is promised to all who fix their eyes on Jesus.

Ponder the joy and peace of the saints in heaven.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

A great sign appeared in heaven:
a woman clothed with the sun, and the
moon beneath her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary,
the Mother of your Son,
body and soul into heavenly glory,
grant, we pray,
that, always attentive to the things that are
above,
we may merit to be sharers of her glory...
Amen.

FIRST READING Apocalypse 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

A reading from the book of the Apocalypse.
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."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalms 44

Response:

On your right stands the queen,
in garments of gold.

- The daughters of kings are among your loved ones.
On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words: forget your own people and your father's house. (R.)
- So will the king desire your beauty: he is your lord, pay homage to him.
They are escorted amid gladness and joy; they pass within the palace of the king. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

Mary has been taken up into heaven;

all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Luke 1:39-56

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.
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? For 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 had 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under

Pontius Pilate,

he suffered death and was buried,

and rose again on the third day

in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory

to judge the living and the dead

and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,

the giver of life,

who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is adored

and glorified,

who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and

apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness

of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the

dead

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation, our tribute of homage,

rise up to you, O Lord,

and, through the intercession of the most

Blessed Virgin Mary,

whom you assumed into heaven,

may our hearts, aflame with the fire of love,

constantly long for you... Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

All generations will call me blessed,
for he who is mighty has done great things
for me.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received the Sacrament of salvation,

we ask you to grant, O Lord,

that, through the intercession of the Blessed

Virgin Mary,

whom you assumed into heaven,

we may be brought to the glory of the

resurrection... Amen.