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## Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary - 15 August 2023

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# 15 August 2023

## Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Reflection by Peter Black

### 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

**Revelations 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 44:10-12, 16. R. v. 10**

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

This psalm, in using wedding imagery, was chosen for the Lectionary as it applies to Mary in the Christian imagination.

### Second Reading

**1 Corinthians 15:20-27**

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

## Gospel Reading

### Luke 1:39-56

This beautiful song of Mary echoes the song of Hannah in the first Book of Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-8). The women praise God for attending to the needs of the little ones.

## Reflection

The feast day of the Assumption of Our Lady according to our faith celebrates the fact that Mary, 'having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.' Although defined as an article of faith by Pope Pius XII over half a century ago, the Assumption of Our Lady into heaven has been accepted from the earliest of Christian times by the faithful.

The feast was originally celebrated in the East, where it is still known as the Feast of the Dormition, a word which means 'the falling asleep.' The earliest printed reference to the belief that Mary's body was assumed into Heaven dates from the fourth century, in a document entitled 'The Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God.' In short, the assumption demonstrates to us the truth of Christ's promise of eternal life and the resurrection of the faithful. However, I think it tells us more, it also give us insight into our life on earth.

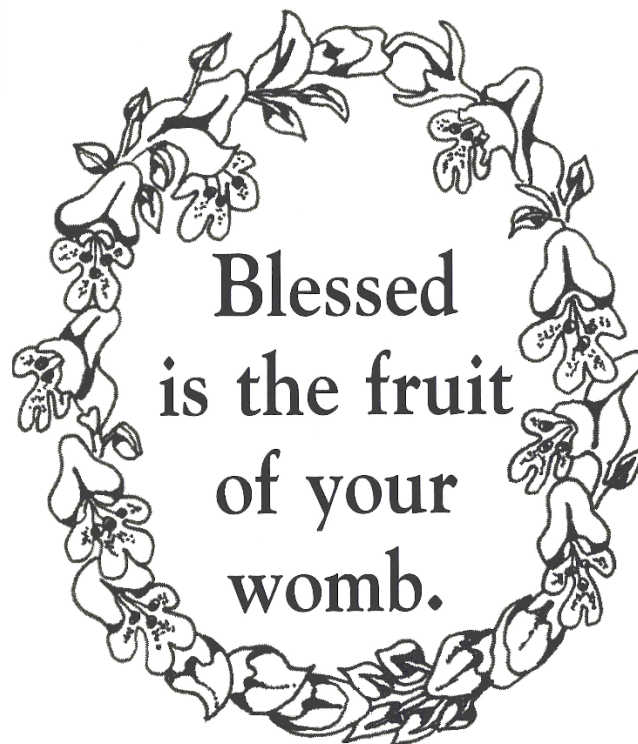
What does the life of Mary and her assumption tell us about our God and ourselves? Firstly, it tells us that our God is great and can be depended on. Some years ago, Benedict XVI, in one of his sermons on the assumption, suggested that the Magnificat, that great poem inspired by the Holy Spirit that came from Mary's lips at the scene of the annunciation, indeed from Mary's heart, is a canticle that mirrors the entire soul, the entire personality of Mary. This hymn is a portrait of Mary, a true icon in which we can see her exactly as she is. It begins with the word 'magnificat' my soul 'magnifies' the Lord says Mary, that is, 'proclaims the greatness' of the Lord. Mary wanted God to be experienced as great in the world, great in her life and a powerful presence among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a 'rival' in her life, that God's greatness might somehow limit her freedom. Her 'fiat' response 'Let it be done according to your word,' powerfully illustrates this fact. In contrast, the core of original sin was that our first parents thought the opposite. The powerful creator was seen as their rival and a threat to their freedom and the working out of their own destiny. They thought that they could be masters of their own lives, independent of the great Creator. They even envisaged themselves as equal to the Creator. Pride was the cause of the fall. The serpent had tempted them with this empty promise that they could be their own gods, masters of their own future and thus have no need of the great Creator. They took the bait, or rather the apple!

So, the life of Mary tells us something about ourselves, who we are called to be, namely, that the way to joy, love and life is found by handing our lives over to the God who is great. A life open to and permeated by our great God is expanded and brought to completion not diminished or limited. Mary achieved this completion through contemplating and living the Word of God. In the words of Benedict XVI,

Mary wove the fabric of her life with the threads of the Word of God. Here is the power of the assumption of Mary, just as her life was in the hands of God so was her eternal destiny. God brings Mary's life to its final fulfillment by assuming her body and soul into heaven.

Our lives too will be brought to fulfillment. The New Eve has led the way. We may struggle to trust in the greatness of our God and be tempted like our first parents to see God as an interference in our thirst for freedom and self-direction. How common it is for our contemporaries to live as if God is not needed in their journey. The passage from the Book of Revelation presents the vision of the struggle between the woman and the dragon. The figure of the woman, representing the Church, is on the one hand, glorious, yet, on the other, still in travail. We, the members of the Church, despite being called to share in the glorious resurrection of Christ, do struggle with our faith and living out the teaching of the gospel.

While the Church on earth continues to struggle, Mary in heaven is already experiencing the glory of her Lord, and she continually prays for us with our trials, shortcomings and challenges. We believe that Mary has a particular place and a particular role in heaven. Just as Jesus said to John at the foot of the cross, 'woman, behold your son,' so Mary continues to be our mother and intercedes for us so that we too can rejoice in our great God now and as we strain ahead, knowing with confidence that we too will reach our completion in heaven.



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

As Mary was raised body and soul to glory, let us 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 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

Loving God, as Mary trusted that you would provide for all her needs, we also trust that you will answer these needs as we make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, your son.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Vigil Mass

Psalm 131: *Lord, go up to the place of your rest, you and the ark of your holiness.*

	CWB
Psalm 131	465

Mass during the day

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

	CWB	JOBA	LPSF	PM
Psalm 44	466	p. 101	p. 100	p. 36

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

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

My spirit sings (FWS/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Gifts, Communion, Recessional]

Mary's song of praise (DOM) [Gathering, Gifts, Communion, Recessional]