



HOMILY FOR THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

For the first 400 years, the Church concentrated on the complex question of ...*who is Jesus?* In 413 AD, the Council of Ephesus spent much of its time discussing Jesus' divinity and humanity, and how the Son of God came into being. The council agreed that the Son of God had a human birth. They agreed that Mary bore Jesus in her womb, and gave birth to him, just like any other mother.

The **next** question was ... *who is Mary?* After much discussion, the Council affirmed that Mary had carried the Son of God in her womb, and thus they proclaimed Mary as the "**Theotokos**"... "**God-bearer**".

After being proclaimed as the "**Theotokos**", Mary was then commemorated, along with all the saints and martyrs. However, the Eastern Church celebrated feasts for her Conception, for her Birth, for her Presentation in the Temple and for the Annunciation.

But the most important feast was her **Assumption**. This feast, and all the other Marian feasts were later adopted by the Roman Church and were included in the Western Catholic church. [Note: it was not until Vatican II, in 1964, that a council of the Church referred to Mary as, "**Mother of God**".]

The belief in the Assumption of Mary like many beliefs had its origin in the popular **faith** of the people.

Christians could not believe, that after being separated from her soul at death, Mary's body underwent decay. They could not imagine, that after the unique role, she had played, in God's plan of salvation, that her body would disintegrate. The faithful came to believe that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven thus **guaranteeing**, that she was present with God, body **and** soul.

Although it was only proclaimed as dogma in 1950, the Assumption had been taught in the Church, for centuries, as a **truth** that **emerged** from the **faith** of the people.

The Assumption points to what **we believe** God will do for **us**. We believe that **our** whole person, body **and** soul, will be raised to a new existence in the peace of God. This is what the **dogmatic definition** tells us, as it expresses the **hope**: quote, "**that the faith in the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven ... may make our faith in our resurrection... both stronger and more active**".

Therefore, through **our** honouring and devotion to Mary, our **hope** in our afterlife, grows. But so does our hope in **this life** grow, day by day. And why?

Mary begins her prayer, just like Jesus begins his prayers, with gratitude and praise, glorifying God. Then Mary's prayer has **one primary subject**. And that is, **the activity of God**. First, God's activity with regard to Mary, then, God's activity with regards to his people.

Mary recognises the grace of God. She knows that she has achieved **nothing** by herself, it is God, who has achieved great things in her. She knows that it is his Grace, that has enabled her to **listen** to the voice of the angel, and put the angel's message into action.

Mary sees God, as a God of fidelity and action. A God of faithful love for his people, a God who intervenes in history, and a God who fulfils all his promises.

But, above all, Mary's Magnificat is a prayer of Good News for the poor.

For many poor people, her song expresses their **hope**, in the liberating power of God. For them Mary is not alive, in statues or pictures. She is alive, in the real and powerful **changes**, that can be brought about, in **this** world.

When God's will, and God's desired changes, are taken seriously, the world **will** change.

Just look at Mary, there is no greater example. Mary said yes to God, and history changed, and now, we are saved, we are reconciled to God. If we say **Yes!** to God's will for **us**, then history **will** change, our tomorrow will be different, our life will be **renewed**.

The Magnificat is Mary's song of Praise. But as I pondered over today's Gospel, I saw a warning in her song.

Mary was the lowly one, the servant, whom God chose to make great. Mary is the mother of all who are suffering, hunger, poverty and injustice. Mary, voices God's opposition to inequality, avarice and cruelty. And Mary is not passive, or silent. She listens to the prayerful cries of the poor, and relays them to her Son.

Mary said: "**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.**"

It is not surprising then, that the poor look to her the most, for help. They believe that one day the rich will get their just desert.

The rich are those who say **No!** to the will of God.

The poor are those who say **Yes!**

*The rich are sent **empty away***, because they only want to be filled with material things.

*The poor are filled with **good things***, because **they** want to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and thus **change, their** tomorrow.