

## ASSUMPTION OF MARY August 14 2021

If you joined us for Mass last weekend, you met Fr. Kevin Kennedy.

He and I have traveled together many times over the years.

Though I wasn't with him for any of those 5 earthquakes he experienced.

Our trips have mostly been in the area - Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania - including an overnight trip to Gettysburg a few years back.

During the day we visited the battlefield and cemetery.

Looking for something to do at night we decided to take a ghost tour.

Gettysburg has tons of ghost tours, but we opted for one that was described as a 'back alley' tour of the town.

Sadly, it wasn't all we'd hoped for.

Walking through an alley behind shops and restaurants at closing time, trying to hear our guide's stories as employees put trash into dumpsters.

Not very scary.

Ghost tours everywhere.

Google any town and you're likely to find a ghost tour nearby.

Our culture seems obsessed with ghosts, zombies, and vampires.

Why?

I think it's because some people wonder, "*what really happens when we die?*"

The good news for us is that Jesus answered the question once and for all 2000 years ago.

His death and resurrection reveals the eternal destiny of all who believe in him.

And what we celebrate today in the Assumption, is that Mary was the first disciple to experience the fullness of the resurrection.

Now, before I get into today's Gospel,

I want to give you a little history about this holy day.

If you go all the way back to the 6th cent,

...1400 years ago....you can find prayers and devotions that speak about Mary's welcome into heaven.

But it wasn't until November 1st, 1950,  
that Pope Pius XII officially declared  
"The Assumption of Mary" to be part of official Catholic belief.  
Here is what he declared infallibly that year:

**SCREEN: when the course of her earthly life was finished  
Mary was taken up, body and soul, into the glory of heaven.**

"Body and soul".

That's a phrase that means the totality of the person of Mary;  
everything she was and is.

So with the Assumption, the Church is declaring that the Blessed Virgin Mary  
- all of her - now dwells with God.

But, why 1950?

Why did the Church wait until then to declare this important teaching?

Pope Pius XII said it was because of everything the world had been through  
in the first half of the 20th century.

100 million people had been killed in two World Wars.

Genocide, the Holocaust, the wanton destruction of life...

because of all this the Holy Father said his intention in declaring  
the Assumption of Mary was to remind the world that  
every single life is sacred and that God wants every person  
to go where Mary now is - with him in heaven.

So for those who believe in Christ, sin and death will never have the last word.

If the celebration of Mary's Assumption was timely and necessary 70 years ago,  
it's just as timely today.

Human life from the very moment of conception is still being threatened in so many ways.  
Nations still wage war, terrorism rages, the pandemic has caused so much  
sickness and death, racial injustice abounds, gun violence is rampant.

We need this feast now more than ever.

We need reminding of the goodness of God -

God who is the giver of all life; earthly life and eternal life.

We also need reminding that every person - regardless of race, religion, nationality or

lifestyle - is a child of God deserving of respect, honor and love.

If we lose sight of these fundamental truths, we are doomed to repeat the tragedies of the past.

So as we honor the eternal life of Mary today, we are also being called to honor the earthly life of all our brothers and sisters.

If we want to know how to do that, a great place to look is the Gospel reading we just heard.

Mary gave us a blueprint for how to make God's truths the ones we practice everyday. So, let's take a look at the words Mary spoke to her cousin Elizabeth.

The Church refers to Mary's speech as the Magnificat, it's a hymn of praise to God.

Mary began by acknowledging her own lowliness.

Yet it was precisely her lowliness that allowed God to bless her and raise her up to greatness.

Then Mary told us:

**SCREEN: God has shown the strength of his arm, and scattered the proud in their conceit.**

She's telling us that God is almighty, all powerful and in control.

Mary is also warning us to avoid the traps of pride and conceit that snare so many. We aren't in control, God is.

We don't need much reminding of that.

The disruption to all our plans and routines over the past 18 months have shown beyond any doubt how little control we have.

Then Mary told us that

**SCREEN: God has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.**

So the remedy for pride and conceit is humility: being humble in the eyes of God and others.

And Mary is the model of humility.

So when we are humble like her, we create room for God to enter in to bless us and raise us up.

And Mary is quick to remind us that God who is powerful and strong is also a good, loving, and merciful God.

She said:

**SCREEN: God has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.**

The past two weekends at Mass we heard Jesus tell us that he is the Bread of Life - he's the Savior who spiritually fills the hungry with his very Body and Blood.

But those who are filled with Christ's gift must take what they receive and go out there to help those who are physically and spiritually hungry.

So practically speaking, how can you and I embrace Mary's message?

How can we make her Magnificat, her song, our song?

**SCREEN: blank red background**

Start as Mary did by recognizing all that God has done for you.

Reflect on the blessings of your life, everything you have - your family and friends, your faith, your material possessions - see all of it as a gift from God, given to you out of love.

Next, be merciful as God is merciful.

Mercy is defined as showing compassion and forgiveness to someone you could punish or hurt.

Our world could use more mercy right now.

Anger, vengeance, and hatred is destroying us.

Be like Mary, embrace mercy and share mercy with the people in your life.

In order to practice mercy you must also choose to be humble, which means rejecting pride and conceit.

When you are filled with pride, you make like all about you - you become selfish and self-centered.

Mary chose to be self-/ess.

She emptied herself and surrendered to God's plan for her life.

She let go of her plans, her desires, her ambitions and took on God's plan.

If you want to be like her, you must do as she did.

And one of the best ways to grow in the virtue of humility is to serve others.

Mary told us that God fills the hungry with good things.

God uses us to do that.

How can you feed the hungry and hurting of the world?

There are lots of easy ways to do it, whether it's supporting our Sharing Pantry or outreach ministries or other charities you hear about.

We have the power to solve our world's problems.

What is lacking is the will to do it.

So many are indifferent to the suffering of others.

Mary's message challenges to make a difference and make the world a better place.

The loving good person, even alone, can make a difference.

Because if God could favor Mary - a poor peasant girl from a small country - and through her, bring salvation to the world, then God can use you to help feed the world today.

So think of your family, your neighborhood, your workplace or school, and your parish.

What is one way you can step up and serve in any of those places this week?

This Mass of the Assumption, the Church is challenging you to make Mary's magnificat, your song.

As she became God's servant and changed the world so must you.

Through Mary's example and by her prayers may we say yes to God today and everyday, that one day we may live with her forever in heaven. Amen.+