

Assumption of Mary, Vigil, Xavier Church, 1 Chron. 15, 3-4. 15-16; 16, 1-2; Ps. 132; 1 Cor. 15, 54-57; Lk. 11, 27-28

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Dear brothers and sisters, the Assumption of Mary was proclaimed as a dogma of the Catholic Church in 1950 by Pope Pius XII. Remember, a dogma is a truth of faith, handed down by witnesses of faith. There is an age-old belief, in both the Western and Eastern churches, that after death, Mary has been taken up to heaven with soul and body. This belief has been expressed in scholastic theology and in art, including the icons of the East. The dogma of the Assumption of Mary is relevant to all of us, because in Mary we see a foreshadowing of the resurrection of body and spirit that awaits us all and that we always profess in the creed.

In the Old Testament, Isaiah speaks of death being overcome by the Lord God. In Isaiah chapter 25, verse 8, it says: 'He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces; The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth; for the Lord has spoken.' Remember, this is some seven hundred years before Christ. According to Isaiah, this prophecy will become reality in Jerusalem. Some seven hundred years later, the resurrection of Christ has happened in Jerusalem. Therefore Saint Paul in the New Testament quotes Isaiah's prophetic words in his letter to the Corinthians, which we heard in the second reading. Some of St. Paul's lines are beautifully put into music by Georg Friedrich Händel in his Messiah: 'Death, where is your sting, where is your victory?' Probably, this is an ancient hymn from the times of Saint Paul, expressing that when we hold firm to our belief in the resurrection of Christ, we do not have to fear death. As St. Paul continues: 'But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

We believe that after their death, the saints are immediately taken up to heaven and greeted by Christ. *A fortiori*, to a greater extent, the Church believes this of Mary, since she was without sin. This belief, brothers and sisters, can help us when evil befalls us, for example through illness, or the death of loved ones. It can teach us to accept temporary evil, knowing that after all, the good triumphs. It could help us, not to focus too much on our bodily condition, but rather concentrate on spiritual matters. The body, which here on earth suffers every now and then, will be restored in heaven, although some purification may first be needed.

In this Vigil's Gospel, the woman who approaches Jesus focuses on the blessed body of the Mother of God. Jesus does not deny that Mary is indeed blessed, but He adds that it is more important to listen to the word of God and to observe it. This is what Mary has also done in her life.

And this gave her great joy, to obey the word of God, although sometimes, bodily hardships were also part of her life. Still, the joy remained and it could be compared to the joy David was expressing when the ark of the covenant was carried into Jerusalem.

This ancient liturgy, as described in the first reading marked the entrance of God's commandments and his covenant in the holy city and the people celebrated with instruments and with burnt offerings and peace offerings. Similarly, every time when we celebrate the Eucharist in a solemn way, we do so with singing and music. We offer ourselves to the Lord and through the consecration, bread and wine are transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of our Lord. When we consume the holy Communion, we remain united to God and to one another. Let therefore our hearts be fulfilled with the same joy which David and Mary experienced when they obeyed the word of God. Amen.

## Intercessions

Pr.: Dear brothers and sisters, let us now offer in confidence our prayers to God the Father:

L.: For the Church, that in Mary she may find an example of patience and of receptivity to the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

L.: For the leaders of the governments, that they will not cease from fighting evil in the world and will work for justice and peace, we pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

L.: For the poor, that they may find consolation and concrete help in their distress, we pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

L.: For people in their last phase of life: that they may continue to trust in God who watches over them and will save them from death, we pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

L.: We pray for the intentions of this Eucharist:

...

... and a moment in silence for what we keep in our hearts:

...

we pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pr.: Gracious God, these are our prayers and intentions which we submit to You. We ask You to hear us willingly through Christ our Lord.