



The Holy See

HOLY MASS ON THE SOLEMNITY
OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI

*St Thomas of Villanova Parish, Castel Gandolfo
Wednesday, 15 August 2012*

[Video]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On 1 November 1950, Venerable Pope [Pius XII](#) proclaimed as Dogma that the Virgin Mary “having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory”. This truth of faith was known by Tradition, was affirmed by the Fathers of the Church, and was a particularly important aspect in the veneration of the Mother of Christ. Precisely this devotional element, so to speak, was the driving force behind the formulation of this Dogma. The Dogma appears as an act of praise and exaltation of the Holy Virgin. It also emerges from the text of the Apostolic Constitution, where it affirms that the Dogma is proclaimed for “the honour of her Son... for the increase of the glory of that same august Mother, and for the joy and exultation of the entire Church”. What was already celebrated in the veneration and devotion of the People of God as the highest and most permanent glorification of Mary was thus expressed in the form of a dogmas; the act of the proclamation of the Assumption was presented almost as a liturgy of faith. And in the Gospel which we have just heard, Mary herself prophetically pronounces a few words that orientate us in this perspective. She says: “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48). It is a prophecy for the whole history of the Church. These words of the *Magnificat*, recorded by St Luke, indicate that praising the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, intimately united to Christ her Son, regards the Church of all ages and of all places. The fact that the Evangelist noted these words presupposes that the glorification of Mary was already present in the time of St Luke and he considered it to be a duty and a commitment of the Christian

community for all generations. Mary's words tell us that it is a duty of the Church to remember the greatness of Our Lady for the faith. This Solemnity is an invitation to praise God, and to look upon the greatness of Our Lady, for we know who God is in the faces of those who belong to him.

But why is Mary glorified by her Assumption into Heaven? St Luke, as we have heard, sees the roots of the exaltation and praise of Mary in Elizabeth's words: "Blessed is she who believed" (Lk 1:45). And the *Magnificat*, this canticle to God, alive and active in history is a hymn of faith and love, which springs from the heart of the Virgin.

She lived with exemplary fidelity and kept in the inmost depths of her heart the words of God to his people, the promises he made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, making them the content of her prayer: the Word of God in the *Magnificat* became the word of Mary, the lamp for her journey, thus preparing her to receive even in her womb the Word of God made flesh. Today's Gospel passage recalls this presence of God in history and in the unfolding of events; in particular, there is a reference to the Second Book of Samuel Chapter Six (6:1-15), in which David moves the Holy Ark of the Covenant. The comparison is clear to the Evangelist: Mary expecting the birth of her Son Jesus is the Holy Ark that contains the presence of God, a presence that is a source of consolation, of total joy. John, in fact, leaps in Elizabeth's womb, just as David danced before the Ark. Mary is the "visit" of God that creates joy. Zechariah, in his song of praise says explicitly: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people" (Lk 1:68). The house of Zechariah experienced the visit of God by the unexpected birth of John the Baptist, but above all by the presence of Mary, who bore within her womb the Son of God.

But now let us ask ourselves: how does the Assumption of Mary help our journey? The first answer is: in the Assumption we see that in God there is room for man, God himself is the house with many rooms of which Jesus speaks (cf. Jn 14:2); God is man's home, in God there is God's space. And Mary, by uniting herself, united to God, does not distance herself from us. She does not go to an unknown galaxy, but whoever approaches God comes closer, for God is close to us all; and Mary, united to God, shares in the presence of God, is so close to us, to each one of us.

There is a beautiful passage from St Gregory the Great on St Benedict that we can apply to Mary too. St Gregory the Great says that the heart of St Benedict expanded so much that all creation could enter it. This is even truer of Mary: Mary, totally united to God, has a heart so big that all creation can enter this heart, and the ex-votos in every part of the earth show it. Mary is close, she can hear us, she can help us, she is close to everyone of us. In God there is room for man and God is close, and Mary, united to God, is very close; she has a heart as great as the heart of God.

But there is also another aspect: in God not only is there room for man; in man there is room for God. This too we see in Mary, the Holy Ark who bears the presence of God. In us there is space for God and this presence of God in us, so important for bringing light to the world with all its sadness, with its problems. This presence is realized in the faith: in the faith we open the doors of

our existence so that God may enter us, so that God can be the power that gives life and a path to our existence. In us there is room, let us open ourselves like Mary opened herself, saying: "Let your will be done, I am the servant of the Lord". By opening ourselves to God, we lose nothing. On the contrary, our life becomes rich and great.

And so, faith and hope and love are combined. Today there is much discussion on a better world to be awaited: it would be our hope. If and when this better world comes, we do not know, I do not know. What is certain is that a world which distances itself from God does not become better but worse. Only God's presence can guarantee a good world. Let us leave it at that.

One thing, one hope is certain: God expects us, waits for us, we do not go out into a void, we are expected. God is expecting us and on going to that other world we find the goodness of the Mother, we find our loved ones, we find eternal Love. God is waiting for us: this is our great joy and the great hope that is born from this Feast. Mary visits us, and she is the joy of our life and joy is hope.

What is there to say then? A great heart, the presence of God in the world, room for God within us and room for us in God, hope, being expected: this is the symphony of this Feast, the instruction that meditating on this Solemnity gives us. Mary is the dawn and the splendour of the Church triumphant; she is the consolation and the hope of people still on the journey, it says in today's Preface.

Let us entrust ourselves to her Motherly intercession, that she may obtain that he strengthen our faith in eternal life; may she help us to live the best way the time that God has given us with hope. May it be a Christian hope, that is not only nostalgia for Heaven, but a living and active desire for God who is here in the world, a desire for God that makes us tireless pilgrims, nourishing in us the courage and the power of faith, which at the same time is the courage and the power of love. Amen.