

The Assumption of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, 15 August 2021

Scriptures: Revelation 11:19; 12:1-6,10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27;  
Luke 1:39-56

Homily: Fr. Ken

For scripture scholars and theologians alike, including the noted Latin American Fr. Gustavo Gutierrez, "everything is grace".

The saints are our models of Christian life. This is uniquely true of Mary, the mother of Jesus, because of the exceptional role she plays in the history of salvation.

Mary's canticle in today's Gospel is called the Magnificat. Mary proclaims this song of thanksgiving not as an isolated person but as the daughter of a people. This is clearly Luke's intention.

Mary sings the greatness of God, with her people. The power of Jesus, made known in history through his salvific deeds, is the source of profound rejoicing. God's liberating actions come from the lowly, the destitute, and the oppressed. God looks on Mary with love which makes the young Jewish girl happy. The covenant between God and the people starts to be renewed in Mary. The joy which Mary is experiencing prepares her to proclaim the good news. At the source of the proclamation of the gospel, we always find a joyful experience of the Lord. This feeling expands her heart and prepares her, once again, to welcome the presence of the Lord.

Thus, Mary moves to the central point of her canticle, the proclamation of the holiness of God. God's mercy reveals the welcoming, the tender, and the out reaching character of God, touching everyone that ever lived. It is also the foundation of what is celebrated on their Marian feast day of the Assumption. Everything comes from God and from God's gratuitous love. This is the heart of biblical revelation.

Preference for those who are poor and oppressed runs through the entire Bible. Mary's song powerfully recalls this preference. "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty". The text simply states what we read here and in the entire Bible. Attempts to soften the message and to take away its historical biting critique simply ignores the biblical promises. Once more, we are in the presence of what is called a "messianic inversion". As Jesus will say, the last will be first. In Mary's song, the poor are identified in terms of a basic and cruel deprivation: hunger.

As we are well aware, hunger here signifies premature and unjust death—unjust because it is the result of exclusion and deprivation, the result of sin.

This complex reality helps the understanding of St. Paul's statement about the resurrection of Christ: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death". The resurrection is the victory over death and over all that death implies. It is the affirmation of life. History, in the course of which the Son of God becomes incarnate, Mary who carries him in her womb, and the Church which has to proclaim him: all three are imbued with life.

All of this becomes the subject of thanksgiving for Mary and for her people. The spiritual power of the Magnificat—from the perspective of a reality marked by poverty, we are especially sensitive to it—consists in making us see that the quest for justice must be placed within the framework of the grace of God's love. This is a demanding and profound synthesis at stake in which, as Mary's song reminds us, is our fidelity to Jesus' gospel.

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