

ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY 2023

An Easter hymn came to mind as I prepared for the liturgy today.

Battle is o'er, hell's armies flee:
raise we the cry of victory
with abounding joy resounding,
alleluia, alleluia.

That beautiful Easter hymn speaks of what we celebrate today in Mary's assumption.

This is a day of victory. It takes us right back to Genesis 3 and the fall, and it proclaims with great confidence, like the Resurrection, that love can never be defeated. The plan and purpose of God that began before the foundation of the world, the plan that involved the immaculate conception of Mary, the bearer of God, our warrior Queen, comes to this triumphant point of her entrance into heaven. St Augustine says: "*Before conceiving the Lord in her body she had already conceived him in her soul*". Commenting on this Pope Benedict remarked:

"Mary had made room for the Lord in her soul and thus really became the true Temple where God made himself incarnate, where he became present on this earth. Thus, being God's dwelling place on earth, in her the eternal dwelling place has already been prepared, it has already been prepared for ever... If this is true, Mary does not merely invite our admiration and veneration, but she guides us, shows us the way of life, shows us how we can become blessed, how to find the path of happiness."

Let us then be guided by the liturgy of the Word and three phrases that point to why this is a celebration of God's victorious plan. The first reading proclaims: '*A great sign appeared.*' What a huge surprise when heaven opened, and the Ark of the Covenant appeared. The Ark that had been lost since the time of Jeremiah. But now it was not a box covered with gold, rather it was flesh and blood, a woman, pregnant with life. The Ark was a person, and the contents of this Ark was the very presence of God himself, not mere symbols. A great sign had indeed appeared, the one who was prophesied in the protoevangelium of Gen 3:15, she who was to crush the serpent's head. No wonder the father of lies hates Mary so much. Maximillian Kolbe wrote:

"The conflict with hell cannot be engaged by men, even the most clever. The Immaculata alone has from God the promise of victory over Satan. However, assumed into Heaven, the Mother of God now requires our cooperation. She seeks souls who will consecrate themselves entirely to her, who will become in her hand's effective instruments for the defeat of Satan and the spreading of God's kingdom upon earth."

A powerful sign has appeared and has been given to us - a mother who walks with us and a mother who forms us. This takes us to the second phrase from God's Word today. St Paul proclaims that we have been, '*brought to life in Christ*'. St Louis de Montfort claimed that the surest, quickest, and easiest way to become a saint was to give oneself to Jesus through Mary, total consecration. God wants to form us into saints, he desires us to share in His holiness and

so to share in His work of salvation. As co-workers we see that Mary is not simply the mother of the Messiah who then retires quietly having fulfilled her role. At the vital moment of the Crucifixion, just before His death Jesus' final act is to hand Mary over to us to be our mother also. Hence, she is in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost.

Mary gives birth to us as disciples of Jesus and ensures that we are brought to life in Christ. As the first missionary disciple there simply is no one better to walk with us and guide us. Mater Monochorum is not simply a dedication of a chapel in the crypt, it is a reality that will bring to fruition the vows of our Baptism and monastic profession. As St Louis de Monfort wrote:

“We never give more honour to Jesus than when we honour his mother, and we honour her simply and solely to honour him all the more perfectly. We go to her only as a way leading to the goal we seek - Jesus, her Son.”

God's great sign, who nourishes us and guides us to life in Christ brings us to the final piece of advice that God's Word gives us today and it's the example of the mother of hope: *'Mary set out and went as quickly as she could.'* Mary was the first to proclaim the good news after the annunciation. In his homily at Fatima on 5th August Pope Francis put it this way:

“the Gospel says she “went with haste”; yet we could say she ran out, ran eagerly to help, to be present...Mary has many titles, but we can think of another that we could add to them: “Our Lady who runs”, every time there is a problem; whenever we seek her aid, she does not delay, she comes to us, she hastens. She is “Our Lady of haste”She hastens to be near to us; she hastens because she is our Mother... the Portuguese word [for haste] is apressada... Mary shows us what Jesus is asking of us: Today, I would like us to look at the image of Mary, and ask ourselves, “What is Mary saying to me as Mother? What is she showing me?”. She is directing us to Jesus; yet, sometimes, she also shows us aspects of our lives that are not going so well, but she always directs us to Jesus. “Mother, what is it that you wish to show me?”.

A sign, who brings us to life in Christ and who takes us into her school of evangelisation and then sets us on a journey to proclaim the good news, to be good news for others. No wonder she is 'Our Lady of Haste' because she is a mother of hope, a mother filled with hope. When you have good news, you simply cannot keep it to yourself. A day of victory. A day to rejoice with a mother whose only mission is to speak to us of the hope -the hope that Jesus brings.

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