

Homily notes: (live recording at Mass will expand these)
Feast of The Assumption 2020

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In the days of the early Church things were not well at all. The gospel writers were writing to a Christian people who were suffering great persecution. Terrible things were being done, enough to make people lose hope in life and to despair. The Evangelists wrote to assure their fellow Christians that all will be well.

Over the past 6 months the main news has been of very little other than the coronavirus pandemic. Unrest there certainly is all around the world; we are not free to come and go as we please: our mask the sign of our lack of freedom. All pilgrimages have been cancelled, including our Cornish one to Walsingham, and in March in the midst of our Lent Course: “Let it be done unto me, according to your word: How Mary helps us to be filled with God,” we had to stop meeting.

Today injected into all that is this glorious feast, a solemnity of great importance. This day we are bidden to lift our eyes above, as St John takes us in vision to the sanctuary in heaven. John knows the truth about Christ, who went through suffering and death and rose to life again. That is why all shall be well. The dragon of evil will be destroyed and the child, Mary’s child will be victorious.

In previous years I have have spoken about the Ark, and Mary as the New Ark of the Covenant, as she bears her son. More links with the Ark. St Luke’s gospel tells us more about Mary the Mother of Jesus than any other NT book. Most of this is packed within his first two chapters, where Luke tells us about her life and mission.

Today’s gospel is of the Visitation and Mary’s Magnificat. On one level it is the joyous encounter between two expectant mothers, on another it recalls stories about the Ark. The link with this and the Ark in 2 Samuel which is also in 1 Chronicles, links Mary with David. Luke tells us Mary arose and went into the Judean hill country to visit Elizabeth, reminding of how David arose and went into the

same region centuries earlier to retrieve the Ark. Upon Mary's arrival Elizabeth is struck by the same sense of awe and unworthiness before Mary that David felt standing before the Ark. Luke adds that Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, recalling how the Ark was temporarily stationed in the house of Obed-edom for a waiting period of three months. Luke also brings into his story a highly significant expression once connected with the Ark. The term shows up where Elizabeth bursts out with an exuberant cry at the arrival of Mary and her child.

Although the Greek verb translated as 'gave a loud cry, or exclaimed' seems ordinary enough, it is hardly ever used in the Bible. In the NT it is found only here, and its presence in the Greek OT it appears only five times, and when it does it forms part of the stories surrounding the Ark. This refers to the melodic sounds made by the Levitical singers and musicians when glorifying the Lord in song, as David carried the Ark to Jerusalem. Zechariah and Elizabeth were both Levites, Luke connects the cry of Elizabeth to the Ark, now the new Ark, Mary.

Without any doubt a first meaning of St John is that it is **our Lady, Mary**, clothed with the sun, that is, with God, totally: Mary who lives totally in God, surrounded and penetrated by God's light; surrounded by the 12 stars, that is, the 12 Tribes of Israel, by the whole people of God, by the whole communion of saints, and at her feet, the moon, the image of death and mortality. Mary has left death behind her; she is totally clothed in life, she is taken up body and soul into God's glory and thus placed in glory after overcoming death. She says to us 'Take heart, it is love that wins in the end.' 'The message of my life was: I am the handmaid of God; my life has been a gift of myself to God and my neighbour; indeed to the whole world,' as she brings us the redeemer.

Mary's role as the 2nd Eve is noted in the 2nd R from St Paul's great chapter in Corinthians on Resurrection, with reference to Adam. 'A second Adam to the fight and to the rescue came.'

Here Paul tells that Christ will overcome every enemy, including the last enemy of all, death. We shall not be defeated by anything.

Elsewhere Paul says that no war, no persecution, no atrocity, nothing shall come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus. He the first fruits, and then those who belong to him. Who belongs more to him than his mother, now raised body and soul into heaven. God has brought her life to a glorious completion Our Lady is clothed with the sun of Justice, Christ the Lord.

Her beauty consists in her immersion in Christ. Thus she defeats death (the moon) and enjoys an unheard- of intimacy with the entire Communion of Saints (the crown of 12 stars). Where she has gone we too hope to follow, as the collect says ‘may we merit to be sharers of her glory’.

She, the highest honour of our race as she gives her son, who brings us all to the glory of the Resurrection and Eternal life.

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