

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson.

Sunday 15th August 2021

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Readings: 1st: Apocalypse 11:19. 12:1-6. 10. Psalm: 44. 2nd: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. Gospel: Luke 1:39-56.

A kind person gave me a book 'Jesus and the Jewish roots of Mary,' which is an amazing read as it takes the reader from the Garden of Eden to the book of Apocalypse or Revelation, to reveal where Catholic beliefs about Mary really come from. It is written by Professor Brant Pitre, an American, well supported by Scott Hahn and Bishop Robert Barron.

Dr Pitre uses the Old Testament and ancient Judaism to show how the Bible itself teaches that Mary is the new Eve, The Mother of God, The Queen of Heaven and Earth and the new Ark of the Covenant.

He writes to show that Catholic beliefs about Mary are deeply rooted in ancient Christianity, and that these ancient beliefs flowed directly out of what early Christian's believed about **Jesus**.

Our Catechism says exactly that 'What the catholic faith believes about Mary is based on what it believes about Christ and what it teaches about Mary illuminates in turn its faith in Christ. (CCC 487)

Pope Emeritus Benedict wrote "The image of Mary in the New Testament is woven entirely of Old Testament threads."

Most of you know I have spoken in past years about Mary as the new Ark of the Covenant, from 1st reading of either the vigil Mass or today's Mass. The first key passage for connecting Mary with the Ark is the annunciation, when Angel Gabriel announces she will give birth.

How: The angel says The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. To the Jews of the time: it is the return of the long –absent "cloud of God's Glory, which overshadows the Tabernacle, The Ark in Exodus. In other words, just as the Ark in the Tabernacle was the special place of God's presence in the Exodus from Egypt, so now, through the annunciation Mary becomes the special

dwelling place of God's glory in the new Exodus. These allusions to the Tabernacle and the Ark are present in today's gospel story of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth. When Luke's account of Mary's visit to Elizabeth is read in the light of the O.T. story of King David bringing the Ark up to Jerusalem, several striking parallels emerge.

The Ark of the Covenant

The glory of the Lord and the cloud cover the Tabernacle containing the Ark and 'overshadow' them.

David 'arose and went' to the hill country of *Judah* to bring up the Ark of God

David admits his unworthiness to receive the Ark by exclaiming 'How can *the Ark of the Lord* come to me?'

David 'leapt' before the Ark as it was brought in 'with shouting.'

The Ark remained in the hill country, in the house of Obed Edom, *three months*.'

So from this we can draw important theological truths. If Mary is the new Ark then her body is nothing less than the dwelling place of God on earth, so by implication Jesus is God on earth, he is divine. Link all that with what the last few weeks have been 'I am the bread of life'

The Apocalypse reading tells us of the woman who is in heaven. An early Christian writer says 'Mary is not carried like Moses Ark of old, drawn by oxen, but she is escorted and surrounded by an army, heaven's holy angels.' John of Damascus on this feast writes 'Today the holy living ark of the living God, the one who carried her own maker within herself, comes to rest in the temple of the Lord not made by hands.

The Virgin Mary

The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and the power of the Most High 'overshadows her.

Mary 'arose and went' into the hill country of *Judah* to visit Elizabeth

Elizabeth admits her unworthiness to receive Mary by exclaiming 'Why should I be honoured with a visit from *the Mother of my Lord*.'

John 'leapt' in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice and Elizabeth cried 'with a loud shout'

Mary remained in the hill country, in Elizabeth's house, *three months*'

St Paul in the 2nd reading, his magnificent chapter on the resurrection, tells of Christ as the first fruits and then, those who belong to him. Who belongs to him more than his Mother?

Heaven, with transcendent joys her entrance graced.
Next to his throne the Son his Mother placed;
And here below, now she's of heaven possest;
All generations are to call her blest.

Canon Philip Dyson

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