

Homily Feast of the Assumption
August 15, 2020

A Definitive Picture

Perhaps you are someone like me have over the years collected photos and ordered them chronologically in albums or electronically. In these albums are pictures that recall events that include family, and friends. Although these photos are not the people or events themselves, they are there to remember the unfolding of our life narrative and remind us of people whose lives have touched us in very meaningful and significant ways.

Photos are to our personal stories what dogmas are to the story of salvation. A dogma is the Church's definitive interpretation of a dimension of the biblical witness. Today is a day when we remember that dogma that was most recently promulgated, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. Through his Apostolic Constitution, entitled "The most bountiful God" released on 1 November 1950, Pope Pius XII declared that the Blessed Virgin Mary, being the mother of our Lord and Saviour did not die but was brought body and soul into heaven. So although for centuries, the Church had believed in the Assumption of Mary, on All Saints Day 1950 Pope Pius XII realized there was the need of a definitive photograph to be added to the Album of Salvation's Story to capture the great significance of the Assumption.

And what is the Assumption's significance? On December 22 1987 when speaking to the Roman Curia Pope Saint John Paul II answered this question when he said:

Mary was the first disciple, who by her assent to the angel's message made possible the incarnation of the Son of God. The incarnation has been "extended" in history through the Church, the mystical body of Christ. Mary's assumption into heaven prefigured the glorification of all who will be saved. Thus Mary provides

- a profile of what the Church is,
- of how the people of the Church should live
- and of what the destiny of disciples will be."

The Assumption is important because it shows us a picture of the goal of all discipleship, to be glorified with Mary before the Blessed Trinity.

Such a picture of our future destiny is to inspire us in the present so we can know what the Church is and how the people of the Church should live.

The Gospel reading for this morning gives us insight into what the Church is and how we are to live. And the Revelation Reading and the Epistle give us a picture of our future destiny.

The Church is that Community that takes seriously those pictures that capture for us the outworking of God's saving activity. This is because the church is that community of memory that holds onto the promises of God because with Mary we know that God is true to his word.

Remember it was said of Mary she treasured all the words that Simeon had spoken to her in her heart at the Presentation of Jesus. In this morning's Gospel text Elizabeth declares:

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Following the example of Mary's discipleship we the Church are the family that is learning to take God at his word as we treasure his words in our hearts and discover their fulfillment in our lives and in history.

Mary in her *Magnificat* then sings us the song that celebrates how we are to live. The Church is the community that is learning to magnify God by the way we live our daily lives, recognizing that the values of the world, where the powerful are admired and emulated is a distorted telling of the humanity's story. We are learning that it is the way of humility and trust, as our hearts are conformed to the heart of the full and true disciple Mary, that we can truly live a Marian shaped life.

If the Church is a community trusting in God's word so that we can live with Marian humility we also anticipate that the Story of the Assumption will one day also include us. For the degree to which we conform ourselves to Mary in her humility now will have a proportional effect to how we will be transformed to her in her assumptive glory.

In Corinthians Paul anticipates every enemy will be put under the feet of Christ. At that time those who are Christ's disciples will assume their full and eternal glory. A glory captured for us in a picture described in the Revelation this way:

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.¹

Thanks be to God for the Dogma of the Assumption. The more we gaze on this photo we see the profile of what the Church is, of how the people of the Church should live and of what the destiny of disciples will be.”

¹ [*The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*](#). (1993). (Re 12:1). Washington, DC: National Council of Churches of Christ.