

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Mary is taken up to heaven;
a chorus of angels exults.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel Luke 1:39-56; L622

Mary set out

and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of
Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy
Spirit,

cried out in a loud voice and said,
"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should
come to me?

For at the moment the sound of your
greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the
Lord
would be fulfilled."

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of
the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his
lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call
me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things
for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
and has scattered the proud in their
conceit.

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Reflecting on the Gospel

The assumption of Mary into heaven, an event that is not described in the biblical tradition, has nevertheless been a part of the church's tradition since the early centuries. It emerged out of reflection among the faithful on the profound role Mary had in the salvation of all humanity, especially in her openness and faithfulness to God. Her openness and faithfulness to God were most profoundly witnessed in her bearing and giving birth to the Son of God, her son Jesus. It

was understood that her role in the divine plan warranted her being taken bodily to heaven, to be in the home of God, the one to whom she gave a home in God's earthly sojourn.

Some have seen support for the church's teaching regarding Mary in the image of the "woman clothed with the sun" in Revelation. The woman certainly could stand for Mary, since the woman "gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod." But like so many images in Revelation, the symbol is polyvalent, having more than one referent. Remember, the woman had "on her head a crown



of twelve stars," which could signify the twelve tribes of Israel or the twelve apostles, so referencing the church. Later, the woman "fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God." The Lectionary omits the conclusion of the verse: "that there she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days" (NABRE)—most certainly a reference to the church, as the "twelve hundred and sixty days" refers to a symbolic number in Daniel regarding a period of three and a half years before the time of the end.

The point is that Mary is in heaven with her Lord and she is not simply the stuff of legendary, mythic, or symbolic numbers. She was an actual flesh and blood woman, chosen above all people, male or female, to play the most significant human role in the divine salvific plan. We should never lose track of her humanity. There is this temptation to dehumanize her, but this pays no justice to her faithfulness or to Mary as a model woman, someone women and men can follow as exemplary in trust and joy.

When Mary heard the word from the angel, she went to confide in another woman, not in the men of her family. She traveled "in haste" to the Judean hill country to see her relative Elizabeth. It was Elizabeth to whom Mary entrusted her momentous news and Elizabeth, far from questioning Mary, was open to Mary and her greeting. The Holy Spirit filled Elizabeth and she cried out, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?"

Elizabeth was there for Mary, open to her joy and faithfulness, open to being with her and listening to her story. It was in response to Elizabeth's belief, recall, that Mary recited the *Magnificat*. In this song of praise, Mary speaks of her joy at being chosen, of being blessed in spite of being what she calls "lowly." More

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 11, 2021

SECOND READING

Eph 1:3-10

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens,
as he chose us in him, before the foundation
of the world,
to be holy and without blemish before him.
In love he destined us for adoption to himself
through Jesus Christ,
in accord with the favor of his will,
for the praise of the glory of his grace
that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption by his blood,
the forgiveness of transgressions,
in accord with the riches of his grace that
he lavished upon us.
In all wisdom and insight, he has made
known to us
the mystery of his will in accord with his
favor
that he set forth in him as a plan for the
fullness of times,
to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven
and on earth.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, July 25, 2021

Gospel (cont.)

John 6:1-15; L110B

Then Jesus took the loaves, gave thanks,
and distributed them to those who were reclining,
and also as much of the fish as they wanted.
When they had had their fill, he said to his disciples,
“Gather the fragments left over,
so that nothing will be wasted.”
So they collected them,
and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments
from the five barley loaves
that had been more than they could eat.
When the people saw the sign he had done, they said,
“This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.”
Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off
to make him king,
he withdrew again to the mountain alone.

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, August 1, 2021

Gospel (cont.)

John 6:24-35; L113B

So Jesus said to them,
“Amen, amen, I say to you,
it was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven;
my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.
For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven
and gives life to the world.”
So they said to him,
“Sir, give us this bread always.”
Jesus said to them,
“I am the bread of life;
whoever comes to me will never hunger,
and whoever believes in me will never thirst.”

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15, 2021

Gospel (cont.)

Luke 1:39-56; L622

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.”
Mary remained with her about three months
and then returned to her home.