

HOMILY

What Has Mary's Assumption To Do With Us?

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Homily for Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle A

Readings: Revelation 11:19;12:1-6,10 1 Cor. 15:20-26 Luke 1:39-56

Today is one of my favorite feasts. I love Marian feasts. Last night I had Mass and I asked, "What is the Assumption about?" They didn't know until finally one Prep kid said, "Mary was taken body and soul into to heaven." Right! But then we might ask "So what that Mary was taken body and soul into heaven! What does that have to do with me? Why should I believe that? Does it have anything to do with my life? Or with the life of Christianity? I don't think I believe it." You must believe it as a Catholic. It's not an option. It's a dogma. It's revelation! You must believe that. But why?

Mary was taken body and soul into heaven because of Christ. Go with me to 1 Corinthians, Chapter 15, Verse 20. This is the second reading "Christ is now raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man. Hence the resurrection of the dead came through man also. Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will come to life again. But each in its proper order. Christ, the first fruit, and then at his coming all those who belong to him."

As with Jesus, so with Mary, so with us. Just as Christ rose from the dead completely, bodily, spiritually, physically so Mary who was first to be redeemed by Christ -- you notice today in Luke Chapter 2. What does Mary say in the Magnificent? "My soul rejoices in God my savior." Mary had a savior and it was her son, Jesus Christ. But she was saved by Jesus at the moment of

her conception. We call that the Immaculate Conception. Why? So that when Christ would take on flesh, he would not take on sinful flesh. You see that dogma, too, has everything to do with Jesus Christ. So because of Jesus and what Jesus did for her at the moment of her conception then later on when she died she was the first to be taken with Jesus with body and soul into heaven.

That says a few things to us today theologically. First, that our body is holy. We believe that we will rise again from the dead, bodily, physically. Everyone of us will be given our body again. This is not a theology that most people buy into. People know it in their heads. But most people, I think, think we're going to become angels. You talk to most kids, even to simple Christians and you ask "What happens when you die?" "You become an angel." No, it will never happen. An angel is an entirely different creature of God. An angel, by definition has no body, never did, never will. An angel is an invisible creation. We are human beings and we will always be human beings. We will always have a body and a soul. That's what humanity is. Jesus Christ today now in heaven glorified has a body, physical body. Mary has a body, a physical body and so shall we. We will rise physically from the dead. The definition of death is when the body and soul separate. That's death. The meaning of resurrection is when the body and soul come back together again. We say that every week, do we not? It's in the creed. I believe in what? The resurrection of the what? The body. We say it every week, and it's not only Catholics who say that. All Christians say that. We believe in the resurrection of these bodies. So we need to take care of our bodies because it's the place where God chooses to dwell. Right now God is inside of you. He's in the tabernacle, yes. But he's just as really present --there's a real presence -- inside of you. The Trinity dwells within you and me. We need to take care of that body. When we work out or walk or eat correctly and don't treat our body as a crappy thing -- what is this for? -- it's the place where God dwells and so I must treat my body in a good way. When I do that it's called temple maintenance because I'm taking care of the temple of my body because in it God chooses to dwell.

The body is holy because of why? We call it incarnation. But when Adam and Eve sinned, the body entered into death. And all the sin and all the death entered into the body. But when Jesus Christ became a man, he took on our flesh and he redeemed the body forever. That's why Catholics always have had such a tremendous support and acceptance of bodily things. That's why we have sacraments. A sacrament makes physically really present in the present moment in our bodies what is happening spiritually. We are very body people. The body is very important. So we talk about how Mary was taken up into

heaven, how Jesus was taken up into heaven and how we shall be taken up into heaven forever because of that. You see what this dogma of faith has to do with us.

Let's focus a bit more on Mary for a second. Go to the first reading Revelation Chapter 12. Where are we in relation to Mary? This is her feast. Some people think it's terrible to take a feast of Mary and put it on a Sunday. Isn't she taking the place of Jesus? Well, let's see.

Revelation 12 talks about the dragon. We only heard the first part of it. After 6, the reading skipped verse 7-9 and went to 10. It talks about war broke out in heaven and Michael came and there was a big fight. After Michael cast out the demons, it says, "NOW has salvation and power come." But let's go on. He goes after the devil again. And the earth swallows up our Mother. Now you realize that the woman clothed with the sun is Mary. She's the one who gave birth to the child, the savior, but look at this. Go to verse 17: And raged at her escape. "The dragon went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep God's commandments and give witness to Jesus." That is a powerful line in Scripture.

Who is the offspring of the woman? Us. We are the offspring of Mary. So when we talk about Mary as being the Mother of God, Mary by definition by the Holy Word of God is also our mother. All generations will call her blessed. She is our Blessed Mother. Do you ever think about it -- that it's all from Scripture? When we talk about the Blessed Mother, we're talking from the Bible, the Holy Word of God! The Holy Word of God is the one who gives witness to whom Mary is. Our Blessed Mother. Have you taken her yet as your Blessed Mother? Really taken her.

Once at Steubenville there was a guy there who didn't believe in any of the "Mary stuff." He was a fundamentalist which in one way is a good thing to be as long as you have this relationship with Christ, this oneness with Christ. So this guy was fully alive in Christ. At Steubenville, they pray the rosary every day. He went to Father John Bertalucci and said, "I really like Steubenville, but I can't take all this 'Mary-stuff'. It's too Marian around here. It drives me nuts." And Father John Bertalucci looked at him and asked: "Do you pray everyday?" He says, "I sure do, Father." "Where do you pray?" "I pray in the chapel?" "Pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament?" "Yeah, I just like it better there." "Very good. The next time you go to pray I want you to look at Jesus and you ask Jesus about his mother." "OK." About a week later, Father John is walking by the chapel and out walks this kid, and this kid is sobbing. Father

went up to him and asked, "What's the matter?" "Father," he's sobbing so he can hardly talk. "You told me to go to the chapel..." "Yes?" "And I went to the chapel and you told me to ask Jesus about his mother..." "Yes?" "That's what I did. I was just sitting there and I asked Jesus about Mary..." "Yes?" "I found out who my mother is!" He came to know who HIS mother was because of Christ. Because from the Cross Christ looked down and said, "Behold YOUR mother" he meant it. Just as really as he said, "This is my body." He meant, "Behold your mother."

Today we need to take Mary into our care as John did and as we do that we know we are a member of the body. One thing when I was in Notre Dame this summer we went through all the initiation rites in the church for the first thousand years. How the people became Christian. You know what? Nobody could become a Christian without the Church for the first thousand years. There was no such thing as a private relationship with Jesus Christ. It never happened. A personal relationship, yes. But there is no such thing -- no such thing -- as a relationship with Christ except in the relationship in the body. It didn't exist for at least the first fifteen hundred years. What we are grounded in, what is revelation is we cannot have a relationship with Jesus unless we have a relationship with the body, his church. It can't happen. And all this stuff about spiritualism is not true and is not of God because it's not founded on what Christ started. He founded the Church. When we enter into relationship with Christ, we enter into relationship with his mother, we enter into relationship with our brothers and sisters -- all the brothers and sisters in the world. They become part of me because when I'm incorporated into the body of Christ, I'm incorporated into everybody because we are all one body.

All of this I tell you today is so you know a couple of things. One is that our body is good. Two is that our bodies will rise again because of Jesus and he showed it with Mary and he's going to show it with us; and three that we together need to belong to this family, a family with a mother, a blessed mother, a family where you know who your mother is. You go to her and ask her to teach and protect you and pray for you. Not to take the place of God but as I said before, if you don't think you need Mary, you make yourself greater than Jesus Christ because Jesus needed Mary and he was God. He needed Mary by his will he humbled himself before her. If you want to be just like Jesus, you and I have to do the same.

Got it? Get it? Good!

May each of you know God's love and Mary's today and forever. Amen.

