

Our Faith

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (15th August)

We find homilies on the Assumption going back to the sixth century. In following centuries, the Eastern Churches held steadily to the doctrine, but some authors in the West were hesitant. However by the 13th century there was universal agreement. The feast was celebrated under various names—Commemoration, Dormition, Passing, Assumption—from at least the fifth or sixth century. Scripture does not give an account of Mary's Assumption into heaven; nevertheless, Revelation 12 speaks of a woman who is caught up in the battle between good and evil. Many see this woman as God's people. Since Mary best embodies the people of both Old and New Testaments, her Assumption can be seen as an exemplification of the woman's victory. Furthermore, in 1 Corinthians 15:20, Paul speaks of Christ's resurrection as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Since Mary is closely associated with all the mysteries of Jesus' life, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit has led the Church to believe in Mary's share in his glorification. So close was she to Jesus on earth, she must be with him body and soul in heaven. In the light of the Assumption of Mary, it is easy to pray her Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55) with new meaning. In her glory she proclaims the greatness of the Lord and finds joy in God her Saviour. God has done marvels for her and she leads others to recognise God's holiness. She is the lowly handmaid who deeply revered her God and has been raised to the heights. From her position of strength she will help the lowly and the poor find justice on earth, and she will challenge the rich and powerful to distrust wealth and power as a source of happiness.

From the Fathers

"And with regard to ourselves, how deservedly do we keep the feast of the Assumption with all solemnity. What reasons for rejoicing, what motives for exultation have we on this most beautiful day! The presence of Mary illumines the entire world so that even the holy city above has now a more dazzling splendour from the light of this virginal Lamp. With good reason thanksgiving and the voice of praise resound today throughout the courts of Heaven...let us not complain for here we do not have a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come, the same which the blessed Mary entered today."

St. Bernard of Clairvaux on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Prayers to Remember

Lord, I believe in you – increase my faith. I trust in you – strengthen my trust. I love you – let me love you more and more. I am sorry for my sins – deepen my sorrow. I worship you as my first beginning. I long for you as my last end, I praise you as my constant helper, and call on you as my loving protector. Guide me by your wisdom, correct me with your justice, comfort me with your mercy, protect me with your power. I offer you, Lord, my thoughts – to be fixed on you; my words – to have your for their theme; my actions – to reflect my love for you my sufferings – to be endured for your greater glory. I want to do what you ask of me – in the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it. Lord, enlighten my understanding, strengthen my will, purify my heart, and make me holy.

From the *Universal Prayer* attributed to Pope Clement XI, 1649–1721

16th August 2020 The Tenth Sunday
after Trinity
20th Sunday
of the Year

Woman, you have great faith



To be one of the people of God doesn't depend on who your parents are, or whether you are circumcised or not, but whether you have faith in Jesus as Lord. Today's Gospel shows the need for total trust and confidence in a Lord who always loves us. We just need to keep praying!

Despite the words of Jesus to the Canaanite woman, God does not see anyone as 'dogs'. 'Dogs' was a Jewish term for Gentiles. Anything that falls from the Master's table, not just the leftover 'crumbs', is meant for everyone who has faith. The woman believed Jesus could help her and Jesus responds to her faith and her need: 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your wish be granted.' The surprise here is that the woman is an outsider, a Canaanite, yet she dares ask and argue with a Jewish man! But Jesus praises her faith, and shows us that God's love is for everyone and does not recognise the barriers men put up.

Perhaps this was the moment Jesus realised His mission was not limited to the lost ones of Israel, when a woman, not a Jew, shows Jesus He is called not just to Israel but to the world.

This meeting also shows us the importance of persistence in prayer: the woman shouts until Jesus listens, because she has great faith. We might ask who she thinks she is, to argue with the Lord, but remember both Abraham and Moses argued with God. The scribes often tried to trap him with their arguments, but this woman is desperate for her daughter and a mother asking help for a child does not take no for an answer. Jesus rewards her persistence, which comes from her faith.