

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Aug 15th 2014

On this solemnity we honor and celebrate Mary, the mother of God. We celebrate the Assumption of Mary as stated in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, LG 59: "Finally, the immaculate Virgin preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, that she might be the more fully conformed to her son, the Lord of lords, (see Apoc. 19:16) and conqueror of sin and death."

The theme that threads through the three readings that the church invites us to pray with and the feast that we celebrate is that of triumph. This is the triumph of God over evil and ultimately death through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. What we celebrate today is that with the unconditional "yes" of a young Jewish woman to God, God's life and salvation were brought to all in past and future generations.

God does triumph over principalities and ultimately over death and we are all brought back into life through Jesus, but God's ways are mysterious. God chooses to do it through us, with us. The Incarnation is contingent on Mary's response. Jesus does not become human through spontaneous generation into a powerful and magic creature that crushed all his enemies and instituted the reign of God, but he becomes human just as we do, going through all the developmental stages of the human life from conception in a woman's womb through death. We can ultimately claim that God's triumph over evil and over death is possible only with Mary's "yes". God gently asks Mary to accept God's gift. Mary, accepting God's gift unconditionally is given a mission. She is sent out of her comfort zone, she goes "to the hill country" (v. 39) to visit her cousin who was also expecting, and she brings the joy of the good news with her. Elizabeth recognizes this and blesses her "who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." (v. 45), at that point Mary explodes in a beautiful canticle of praise to God. Mary praises God because God looks at the weak and the poor with favor and fulfills the promises made to Abraham and his descendants.

Each one of us, like Mary, is offered gifts, talents, opportunities, grace. Let us open up to God's gifts with generosity and unconditionally, like Mary did, so that the Mighty One can do great things for us and with us.

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