

## Closing Prayer

God, our greatest joy,  
by whose choice  
Mary, the lowly woman of Nazareth,  
embraced your eternal Word  
as the son of her womb,  
let us rejoice to call her blessed  
and glorify you  
who have worked in her such wonders.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

*Celebrating the Christian year · 15 August<sup>2</sup>*

Lectionary-based Catechesis • Year A

## Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

*15 August*

### Principal Service readings

Isaiah 61.10-11	God has clothed me with the garments of salvation
or Revelation 11.19–12.6,10A	woman gave birth to a son, snatched from the dragon
Psalms 45.10-17	The king's daughter is all glorious within
Galatians 4.4-7	God's spirit cries within us, 'Abba! Father!'
Luke 1.46-55	Mary's song of praise – the Magnificat

### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,  
speak to our hearts in the stillness,  
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,  
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;  
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

### Gospel Reading

#### *The Magnificat*

[Mary said:]

<sup>46</sup>My soul magnifies the Lord,  
<sup>47</sup>and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
<sup>48</sup>for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
<sup>49</sup>for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
<sup>50</sup>His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
<sup>51</sup>He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
<sup>52</sup>He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
<sup>53</sup>he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
<sup>54</sup>He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,

CPL • LBC Year A Assumption of BVM.odt • 2020-07-01

<sup>2</sup> *Celebrating the Christian year : prayers and resources for Sundays, holy days and festivals, years A, B and C / compiled by Alan Griffiths. – 3 vols. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 2004-5.*

<sup>55</sup>according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.

Luke 1.46-55 NRSV<sup>1</sup>

## Comments and Questions

Luke is the gospel writer who gives the largest role to Mary, from the annunciation, where Mary said 'yes', and the visitation (the setting of today's reading), the nativity of Jesus, and even her own presence at various points in Jesus' life, to Pentecost when she is present with the disciples. As mother of Jesus, or 'mother of my Lord' as Elizabeth calls her (1.43), Mary was in a unique position. But she was not passive, as her words in this passage indicate. She had a vision for justice that would have inspired and informed Jesus.

Many of the themes in her song of praise, that we call The Magnificat, are echoed by Jesus throughout the gospel of Luke and even into the Acts of the Apostles by the disciples of Jesus.

Although our reading comes from the Visitation, we are celebrating today the Assumption, when Mary was taken into heaven (the Latin term *assumptio* means 'taken'). This event isn't actually recorded in the Bible, but is an explanation that the church made about what happened to Mary, the most blessed of women (Luke 1.42). The Eastern Church celebrates the *Dormition* of Mary (that is, the 'sleeping' of Mary), which is another way of looking at it. The doctrine of the Assumption, discussed and celebrated over the centuries, was made official when Pope Pius XII proclaimed as dogma that the Virgin Mary 'having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory,' on 1 November 1950.

In The Magnificat we can see a continuing thread about justice and righting wrongs, that is similar to the song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2. This is the longest proclamation we are given from Mary, and within it we can see that she expands out from what God has done for her personally, to include what God does for 'all who fear him' in every age, including what God is doing for Israel by the birth of its Messiah. As God has 'shown power in his right hand' by his mighty works in the

past, so now he 'takes Israel by the hand'. The song moves in stages from the reversal of Mary's condition from lowliness to exaltation (1.46-49), then to a general statement of God's mercy to those who fear him (1.50), then to a recital of his past and present reversals (1.51-53), and finally to a statement about how his mercy is now being shown in fulfilment of his promise to Abraham (1.54-55). Jesus himself announces such reversals in his blessings and woes (Lukan beatitudes), 6.20-26.

Mary had those strong belief in justice and in God's mighty working, even before Jesus was born. She foresaw a great reversal, that was brought about by her son. How did she react upon Jesus' death? We know that she remained with the disciples up to and including Pentecost. Her faith never seems to have been shaken. She seems to have been prepared for the ultimate reversal from death to life during her entire life.

## Quotations

1

While she lived on this earth she could only be close to a few people. Being in God, who is close to us, actually, 'within' all of us, Mary shares in this closeness of God. Being in God and with God, she is close to each one of us, knows our hearts, can hear our prayers, can help us with her motherly kindness and has been given to us, as the Lord said, precisely as a 'mother' to whom we can turn at every moment.

Benedict XVI, 1927–

2

Therefore the Virgin is immortal to this day, seeing that he who had dwelt in her transported her to the regions of her assumption.

*Homily on Simeon and Anna* / Timothy of Jerusalem. AD 400

## Related topics

*For further study:*

Mary, Mother of God; the Assumption of Mary; Mary, symbol of the church

<sup>1</sup> New Revised Standard Version Bible is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.