

## **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

Mission

17 August 2019

Dear brother priests, deacons, First Nations elders, sisters, seminarians, and dear friends in Christ:

### ***Introduction***

Today, once again the Lord has summoned us to express our heartfelt devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, as we celebrate her Assumption – that moment after death when, unlike any other Saint, she was taken up body and soul into Heaven. By coming together, we are following a tradition at this holy place in Mission which, over the years past and present, has known so much prayer and even, sadly, not inconsiderable tribulation.

This afternoon I am especially grateful to all the communities of the First Nations who are present here. I thank you, brothers and sisters, for your commitment to this pilgrimage and for your deep love of the Mother of Jesus. And I am grateful for pointing all of us on the road to deeper repentance for injustices committed to Indigenous peoples, and for fostering healing and reconciliation among all of God's children.

### ***Proclaiming God's Greatness***

In the beautiful prayer of the Magnificat, which we heard Deacon Terry proclaim in the Gospel, Mary begins by saying, "My soul magnifies the Lord," or "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord" (Lk 1:46).

In her song of praise, she is telling us that if we want our life to be happy, and we all do, we must put God first in our life. Why? Because he alone is our Saviour: “my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour” (Lk 1:47). Mary invites us to look to the “great things” (Lk 1:49) that the Lord has done for her, but also for us. She invites us to stop pursuing things of little or no lasting importance: prejudices, resentment, envy, impurity, superfluous material goods, and so on. Rather, in each of us, too, the Lord has done – and does – many great things: from the gift of life itself and the call to Baptism, and for giving us Mary to guide us on our pilgrimage through life.

Today – and every day – we should rejoice in the gifts we have received, proclaiming the greatness of the Lord for giving us such graces.<sup>1</sup> As Jesus’ disciples, God calls us to imitate Mary and to live with grateful and joyful hearts.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (15 August 2019).

The “great things” which the Almighty did for Mary also tell us something important about our journey in life. Her Assumption reminds us of what awaits us at the end of this journey. “Our life, seen in the light of Mary assumed into Heaven, is not a meaningless wandering, but is a pilgrimage which, while with all its uncertainty and suffering, has a sure destination: our Father’s house, who awaits us with love.”<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, as Pope Francis has said, the Magnificat also leads us to think of the many current painful situations, in particular of women overwhelmed by the burden of life and by the tragedy of violence, of women enslaved by the oppression of the powerful, of children forced into inhuman labour, of women obliged to surrender in body and in spirit to the greed of men. – Here we can think of the our own Highway of Tears and of the plague of human suffering. Then the Pope added. – May they begin as soon as possible a life of peace, of justice, of love, awaiting the day in which they will finally feel they are held by hands which do not humiliate them, but which lift them tenderly and lead them on the path of life, to heaven. May Mary, a maiden, a woman who suffered a great deal in her life, make us think of these

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<sup>2</sup> Francis, Angelus (15 August 2015).

women who suffer so much.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Mary as a Disciple with Elizabeth***

The first verses of today's Gospel introduce us to the young Virgin who, after receiving the news of her own motherhood, leaves "with haste" (Lk 1:39) to help out Elizabeth, in the final months of her unexpected pregnancy. In using the words "with haste" the Evangelist wishes to emphasize that for Mary to live out what she promised – "let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38) – she must not just look to her own situation but reach out to an older cousin who needs her help. Mary's life is totally guided by God's will, a will to be carried out in "holy haste."

Arriving at Elizabeth's home, the young girl from Nazareth hears her utter the words that we now pray in the "Hail Mary": "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1:42). In fact, the gift that Mary brings to Elizabeth – and to the whole world – is Jesus, who already lives within her.

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<sup>3</sup> Francis, *Angelus* (15 August 2016).

Joy overflows at this meeting of the two women, because the invisible but real presence of Jesus fills everything with gladness.<sup>4</sup> Pregnant with Jesus, Mary is the Ark of the New Covenant (cf. Rev 11:19) that contains the presence of God, a presence that is a source of consolation and joy.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Francis, Angelus (15 August 2017).

The house of Elizabeth and Zechariah experienced the visit of God through the presence of Mary, who bore within her womb the Son of God.<sup>5</sup> From the very beginning of her pregnancy, she did not keep this divine presence to herself but offered it to others: then as now.<sup>6</sup>

Today, we contemplate Mary on another journey, this time not to the hill country of Judea but to the Heavenly Jerusalem, where she encounters at last the face of the Father and sees once again the face of her Son Jesus. “She was the first to gather Jesus in her arms when he was still a boy, and is the first to be gathered in his arms to be introduced into the eternal Kingdom of the Father.”<sup>7</sup> Mary crosses the threshold of the heavenly homeland, “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (Rev 12:1).

***Mary as a Mother Always with Us***

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (15 August 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (15 August 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Francis, Angelus (15 August 2016).

Precisely because Our Lady is now with God, she is very close to us. While she lived on Earth she could only be close to a few people. Being with God in Heaven, she can be close to each one of us. Mary knows our hearts; she can hear our prayers; she can help us with her motherly kindness and intercession. Mary has been given to us, as the Lord said from the Cross, precisely as a “Mother” (cf. Jn 19:27) to whom we can turn at every moment, because she is always with us.<sup>8</sup>

“We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart.”<sup>9</sup> Mary entered Heaven “with an uncontainable force, keeping the way behind her open to us all. And for this reason we invoke her today as ‘Gate of Heaven’.”<sup>10</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Mary, crowned as Queen of Heaven, awaits us there ,on the threshold of Heaven, “like a mother waiting for her children to return home.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily (15 August 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily (15 August 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, Homily (15 August 2008).

<sup>11</sup> Francis, Angelus (15 August 2019).

