



The Holy See

EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II

*Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Saturday 15 August 1998*

1. *“Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord” (Lk 1:45).*

With these words, Elizabeth welcomes Mary who has come to pay her a visit. This same beatitude resounds in heaven and on earth, from generation to generation (cf. *Lk 1:48*), and particularly in today’s solemn celebration. Mary is blessed because *she immediately believed* in the Lord’s Word, because she unquestioningly accepted the Almighty’s will revealed to her by the angel at the Annunciation.

We could see in Mary’s journey from Nazareth to Ain-Karin, recounted in today’s Gospel, a prefiguration as it were of her unique spiritual journey which, beginning with her “yes” on the day of the Annunciation, is crowned by her Assumption into heaven in body and soul. A journey to God, ever illumined and sustained by faith.

The Second Vatican Council says that Mary “advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 58). For this reason, she so pleased the King of the universe in her incomparable beauty that now, fully associated with him in body and in soul, she is resplendent as the Queen standing at his right hand (Responsorial Psalm).

I am pleased to celebrate this solemnity, one of the most ancient in honour of Our Lady, with the community of Castel Gandolfo. I affectionately greet all of you who are present here, Bishop Dante Bernini of Albano and his Auxiliary, Bishop Paolo Gillet. I extend my thoughts to the Salesians to whom this parish is entrusted and cordially greet the inhabitants of Castel Gandolfo, the mayor and the holiday-makers.

2. In today’s solemnity, the liturgy invites us all to contemplate Mary as the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (*Rv 12:1*). *In her shines forth Christ’s victory over Satan,*

described in apocalyptic terms as the “great red dragon” (Rv 12:3).

This glorious and at the same time dramatic vision reminds the Church in all the ages of her destiny of light in the kingdom of heaven, and of comfort in the trials she must bear during her earthly pilgrimage. As long as this world endures, history will always be the theatre of the clash between God and Satan, between good and evil, between grace and sin, between life and death.

The events of this century, now drawing to a close, also witness with extraordinary eloquence to the depth of this struggle that marks the history of peoples, but also the hearts of every man and woman. However, the Easter proclamation which has just resounded in the Apostle Paul’s words (cf. 1 Cor 15:20), lays the foundation of sure hope for everyone. Mary most holy, taken up into heaven, is a luminous icon of this mystery and hope.

3. In this second year of immediate preparation for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I have wished to invite believers to be more attentive to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit and to “*a renewed appreciation of the theological virtue of hope*” (*Tertio millennio adveniente*, n. 46).

Mary, glorified in her body, appears today as the star of hope for the Church and for humanity on its way towards the third Christian millennium. Her sublime exaltation does not distance her from her people or from the world’s problems, on the contrary, it enables her to watch effectively over human affairs with that attentive concern with which she obtained the first miracle from Jesus at the wedding in Cana.

Revelation says that the woman clothed with the sun “was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery” (12:2). This calls to mind a text of the Apostle Paul which has fundamental importance for the Christian theology of hope. “We know”, we read in his Letter to the Romans, “that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved” (8:22-24).

As we celebrate her Assumption into heaven in body and soul, we pray to Mary to help the men and women of our time to live in this world with faith and hope, seeking God’s kingdom in all things; may she help believers to be open to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit, the Creator and Renewer Spirit, who can transform hearts; may she enlighten our minds on the destiny that awaits us, the dignity of every person and the nobility of the human body.

Mary, taken up into heaven, show yourself to everyone as Mother of hope! Show yourself to everyone as Queen of the civilization of love!

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