

Meditations: August 15, Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Some reflections that can guide our prayer on the feast of our Lady's Assumption to Heaven.

- Like Mary, heaven is our destiny
- The path our Lady took
- Close to us in our daily life

“A GREAT SIGN appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars” (*Rev 12:1*). These words from the Book of Revelation, which Tradition sees as referring to our Lady, open today’s liturgy. The entire Church rejoices on this feast day, which celebrates God raising in body and soul the mother of his Son to the glory of heaven.

Although we don’t know exactly how this happened, nor is there any certainty about her death, following the words of Saint Josemaría we can imagine all the apostles surrounding Mary, who has fallen asleep.

Heaven’s doors are wide open, in eager expectation. The angels have prepared a joyous welcome to honor our Lady. “Jesus wants to have His Mother, body and soul, in Heaven. And the heavenly Court, arrayed in all its splendor, hails our Lady. The most Blessed Trinity receives and showers honors on the Daughter,

Mother, and Spouse of God. And so great is our Lady's majesty that the Angels exclaim: Who is she?"^[1]

The Assumption of Mary raises our eyes to heaven, the true destination of our earthly journey. All the events in our life take on another dimension when we contemplate them from the perspective of eternity. Over the years, perhaps we have realized that what we once attached so much importance to – a family concern, a reward we eagerly sought at work or the university, a worry about the future – was not always as relevant as we thought. Today's feast reminds us that, in the end, what is truly decisive is to know that we are on the way to heaven and to arrive there. Everything else will be more or less important depending on how much it helps us to reach that goal.

"Talk with our Lady and tell her trustingly, O Mary, in order to live the ideal which God has set in my heart I

need to fly very high – ever so high! It is not sufficient to detach yourself, with God's help, from the things of this world, recognizing them as the merest clay. More is needed: even if you were to put the whole universe in a pile under your feet to get closer to Heaven... it wouldn't suffice! You have to fly, without the support of anything here on earth, relying on the voice and inspiration of the Spirit. You will tell me: But my wings are stained and smeared with the clinging mud of many years. And I repeat: Turn to our Lady. Mary, you should say to her again, I can hardly get off the ground. The earth draws me like an accursed magnet. You can make my soul take off on that glorious and definitive flight which has as its destination the very Heart of God. Trust in her, for she is listening to you.”^[2]

SACRED SCRIPTURE doesn't say anything explicit about the Assumption. Therefore the Gospel proclaimed at Mass today makes no reference to this mystery, but rather presents us with the scene of the Visitation (cf. *Lk 1:39-56*). This passage shows us Mary's eagerness to serve her cousin Elizabeth. And this was precisely the path our Lady took to attain eternal life. "It is love that elevates life. We go to serve our brothers and sisters, and through this service we 'ascend.' It is tiring, but it is ascending upward, it is gaining heaven!"^[3]

Besides reflecting Mary's desire to serve, this Gospel passage shows another attitude that also led her to ascend to heaven: praise. As soon as Mary arrives at Elizabeth's house, she intones a song of thanksgiving for all that God has done in her life: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for

he has looked upon the lowliness of his servant . . . The Almighty has done great things for me" (*Lk 1:46-47, 49*). In the Magnificat, we find a portrait of Mary's heart, another quality that enabled her to rise to heaven. "Praise is like a ladder: it leads hearts upwards. Praise raises souls and defeats the temptation to give in. Have you seen how boring people, those who live off gossip, are incapable of giving praise? Ask yourselves: am I capable of giving praise? How good it is to praise God every day, and others too! How good it is to live in gratitude and blessing instead of regrets and complaints, to lift up our eyes instead of having a long face!"^[4] —

Mary's only desire is to praise God's greatness. She "wanted God to be great in the world, great in her life and present among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a 'rival' in our life, that with his greatness he

might encroach on our freedom, our vital space. Mary knew that if God is great, we too are great. Our life is not oppressed but raised and expanded: it is precisely then that it becomes great in the splendor of God”^[5] The feast of the Assumption reminds us that the path to heaven is within our reach. With God’s grace, we can follow the same path as his mother, for God himself accompanies us and lives within us, helping us to serve those around us and to recognize the wonders He works in our life.

WE CALL Mary Queen of Heaven. At the same time, she is also “Queen of the earth.” The fact that she is in Heaven body and soul does not mean that our Lady is far from us. Precisely because she lives with God, she is closer than we could ever imagine. Mary always hears our

prayers as the good mother of each of her children, and desires more than anyone else that we join her in Heaven. After all, few things bring greater joy to a mother than being with her children. “The feast of the Assumption of our Lady prompts us to acknowledge the basis for this joyful hope. Yes, we are still pilgrims, but our mother has gone on ahead, where she points to the reward of our efforts. She tells us that we can make it. And, if we are faithful, we will reach home. The Blessed Virgin is not only our model, she is the help of Christians. And as we beg her with our petition – *Monstra te esse Matrem*, ‘Show that you are our Mother’ — she cannot help but watch over her children with motherly care.”^[6]

Mary is close to us amid the normality of our daily life. She helps us “to always raise the eyes of our heart to God through whatever task

we are doing.”^[7] Except for a few exceptions, most of her days were simple and normal, like those of any woman of her time: times for work, family life, prayer in the synagogue, village celebrations... Our Lady gradually “ascended” to heaven because she was able to see God in the occupations of each day. “God’s gaze was always upon her, admiring her humility, her availability, the beauty of her heart never stained by sin. It is a great message of hope for each of us, for you whose days are always the same, tiring and often difficult. Mary reminds you today that God calls you too to this glorious destiny. These are not beautiful words: it is the truth. It is not a well-crafted, beautiful ending, a pious illusion or a false consolation. No, it is pure reality, living and true as our Lady assumed into Heaven. Let us celebrate her today with the love of children; let us celebrate her joyfully

but humbly, enlivened by the hope of one day being with her in Heaven!”^[8]

^[1] St. Josemaría, *Holy Rosary*, Fourth Glorious Mystery.

^[2] St. Josemaría, *The Forge*, no. 994.

^[3] Francis, Angelus, 15 August 2023.

^[4] Ibid.

^[5] Benedict XVI, Homily, 15 August 2005.

^[6] St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 177.

^[7] Monsignor Fernando Ocariz, Message, 15 August 2017.

^[8] Francis, Angelus, 15 August 2021.

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