

Rev. Derek Fairman

Solemnity of the Assumption

As we celebrate the Assumption of the Mother of God into Heaven, we call to mind that she is the Ark of the New Covenant. In the first reading, we hear about the Ark of the Lord being taken to the tent which David had pitched for it. David transferred the Ark of the Lord from Shiloh to Jerusalem. Later, his son Solomon would build the Temple, and he would have the priests place the Ark in the Holy of Holies in the Temple.

[In the first reading, St. John sees the Ark of the Covenant in Heaven, and then right after that he sees the mysterious Woman with a crown of stars about her head. In the Gospel, we hear the account of the Visitation, in which Mary visited her kinswoman, Elizabeth. This recalls the time in the Old Testament when the Ark of the Lord was diverted by David away from its destination of Jerusalem and into the house of Obed-edom.]

What does any of this have to do with the Mother of God and her Assumption, her being taken up, into Heaven? The name Ark of the Covenant was only one name for the Ark. We hear other names throughout the Scripture. One of those names is the Ark of the Lord, the Ark of the Lord of Hosts, and the Ark of God. All these names indicate pretty much the same thing: that the Ark, the golden box from the Old Covenant, belonged to the Lord.

The Ark of the Lord belonged to the Lord, for several reasons. The Lord had commissioned Moses to construct it, and so it was the Lord's idea and the Lord's design. The Lord also dwelt upon the Ark; His Presence rested above the cherubim, as if it were a throne. Also, the Ark had no other purpose; only the Lord's presence could dwell there. The Israelites could not use the Ark for storing blankets, or some other use. The Israelites could not use the Ark as they wished, but only as the Lord directed.

In a sense, Mary is the New Ark of the Lord. Why? First, the Lord had made all the preparations for her to be the Mother of God. Throughout the time of the Old Testament, the Lord had prepared her through the good examples of her ancestors. Mary was the Lord's special creation, a creation which began with the Immaculate Conception.

Second, the Lord chose to dwell with her. She was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, after the angel spoke to her. The Holy Spirit came down upon her to dwell, and so in her womb the Word of God came to dwell, or in some translations of the Gospel According to John, Mary

is where He pitched His tent. Just as we have our homes, and we make them our own, so the Lord made Mary His own.

Third, Mary dedicated her life to the Lord. She sought to do His will, not substituting her own will, or not doing God's will whenever it suited her. She was a faithful follower of the Lord whenever the angel came to her, and then she continued to follow the Lord faithfully whenever He was growing up. Mary dedicated herself to her Son's work. She helped her Son in His work of redemption, and she continued to believe in Him and carry on His mission in the Church after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

There are several Fathers of the Church who consider that Mary had made a vow of virginity at some point in her youth. We do not know for sure, but what is certain is that her perpetual virginity is a sign of her faithfulness to the Lord. She belonged to the Lord, and no one else. She would not give her heart to anyone else, although she does love the disciples of her Son as a spiritual mother.

In the first reading, the Ark of the Lord was brought to Jerusalem with joy and lots of hymns. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin also should bring joy to our hearts. [The first reading depicts Mary, the Mother of the Messiah, in glory. The Assumption should bring joy to our hearts, because Mary is in glory now.] In the Assumption, the Lord brings His Ark, His great pearl, the one who belongs to Him, to His home in Heaven. As the Lord dwelt with her when He came to earth, now she draws close to the Lord in His home.

However, her work goes on. She continues to pray for her spiritual children here on earth. She dedicates herself still to her Son's ongoing work that needs to happen in the Church. Her Assumption into Heaven did not mean that she would stop caring. However, it is also a time when the Mother of God reunites with her Son, when she finds joy in the presence of the Lord.

This is also an occasion to remember the important witness of those who are in religious life. There can only be one Mother of God. However, those who receive the special graces of religious life belong to the Lord. They are special to the Lord, and they belong to Him. There are special souls who desire to give their lives to Him.

As we approach the altar, we thank the Lord for giving us Mary as our spiritual mother. We thank her for the witness she gives us of following the Lord, of what it means to be His disciple. We ask her for her help to dedicate ourselves to the Lord's work, and to follow where Mary has led. We pray for her intercession that we may join her with her Son in Heaven.