

Rev. Derek Fairman

Solemnity of the Assumption of the BVM (The Lord's Dwelling)

This day we celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. We remember that the Virgin Mary once served as the Lord Jesus' dwelling for nine months. The Holy Spirit came upon her, not just for a moment, but she was a unique temple for the Holy Spirit throughout her life. The Virgin Mary was taken up into Heaven so that she could dwell in God's house, and live forever body and soul in the Lord's dwelling.

One of the defining features of the city of Jerusalem, Daughter Zion, is that the city was the place where the Lord dwelt. The city was the location of the Temple, where God dwelt on earth, and so the city was holy. The city was set apart and chosen. The city was a place from where God worked among His people. The Lord was not sitting idly by in the Temple, but He was bringing about His saving plan.

The people thought that the city would never be destroyed, but they were wrong. The prophet Ezekiel saw the Lord's glory leaving the Temple, and the Lord's presence and glory were the reasons why the city was indestructible. When the Lord left the Temple, the city was vulnerable to attack. Eventually, the people would come to understand that the Temple was the place where the Lord dwelt, but that the people had to be holy for the Lord to dwell in the Temple. If the people were unholy, the Lord would not remain there.

The Virgin Mary is the Temple in which the Lord Jesus dwelt. The Lord Jesus dwelt in Mary before then: in her mind, by the Scriptures she read, in her soul by the grace she possessed from the very beginning, and in her heart by the faith which she had in the Lord. The invisible presence of the Word of God within her soul then took on our humanity and was incarnate in her womb, where He dwelt. The Lord Jesus came down to dwell in the holiest place on this earth.

The Virgin Mary was not just the place where the Lord Jesus dwelt. At the Annunciation, the angel explained to Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her, and the power of the Most High would overshadow her. The Greek word which is translated overshadow harkens back to the cloud that sat atop Mt. Sinai, that led the Israelites through the desert, and that filled the Temple whenever Solomon dedicated it. As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, the Holy Spirit overshadowing Mary is reminiscent of Israel's cultic experience with the Temple.

The Holy Spirit did not just come upon the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation and then leave. The Holy Spirit did not leave her after the Lord Jesus was born. Rather, the Virgin Mary

was a temple of the Holy Spirit throughout her life, including the day of Pentecost, whenever the Holy Spirit came upon the whole Church.

The holiness and integrity that was present in her soul from the very beginning, that remained with her throughout her life, then blossomed into eternal life. Mary's Assumption into Heaven is not a break from everything that she knew before, but a kind of culmination of what was already present. The one who fulfilled all the prophecies about Daughter Zion, was then taken up into Heaven, into the New Jerusalem, into the place where God Himself dwells. She was brought into Heaven, where there is no temple and where the Lamb of God provides endless light. She who is a unique temple of the Holy Spirit lives in the glory of the Spirit forever. She is a Temple that is not corrupted or destroyed. She is ever-Virgin, signifying her fidelity and incorruption. She shares in the victory of her Son.

The Holy Spirit has come upon us at Baptism, and we have received further gifts of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation. The Holy Spirit brings us spiritual life, and this spiritual life is meant to blossom into eternal life for us as well. Yet, we need to learn the lesson from the city of Jerusalem: The Lord will remain with us only if we are faithful to Him. If we fill our souls with sin and let in things like impure images, vulgar language, watching violent and disgusting movies, listening to impure jokes, then the Spirit's presence will weaken in our souls. The Spirit's presence will not blossom into eternal life, but the impurity will lead to spiritual death.

As we approach the altar, we ask the Lord Jesus to show us the way to Heaven. There is a bit of Heaven in our souls now, and the Holy Spirit placed it there so that it would blossom into eternal life. We want that to happen, but we are not always ready or willing to be faithful to the Lord, especially during times whenever so many other things demand our attention. We feel more comfortable with all the impurity and such. We are not ready to trust in God. We are not ready for the difficult road to Heaven.

The Mother of God is ready to help us. The Mother of God is by us to help us get to our heavenly home, to the New Jerusalem, to the heavenly mansion that God has prepared for us. Heaven is our true home, and what awaits us in Heaven is beyond anything that we can imagine. It is all waiting for us, and Mary is waiting for us as well. While we are here on earth, we have the intercession of the Mother of God, who is with us now and who teaches us what it is like to be a temple of the Holy Spirit. We pray that with her help, the seed of eternal life planted in our hearts in Baptism will blossom in our heavenly home.