

Bulletin Reflection 2021.08.15. Year B1. Solemnity of the Assumption of the BVM.

A handmaid who became the Queen of Heaven

Mary's Visitation began as the story of a young woman who went to help her older cousin. But as soon as she arrived at the house, she was revealed to be the Mother of God and thus the Queen of all creation. Hence it was no surprise that Elizabeth exclaimed, "Why should I be honoured with a visit from the Mother of my Lord?" This revelation radically transformed their relationship, so Mary and Elizabeth were no longer primarily identified as younger and older cousins, but the Queen and her subject. However, even after her new identity was acknowledged and Mary prophesied by singing the Magnificat ("My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord..."), this gracious Queen would imitate the humility of the King in her womb, choosing to serve instead of being served.

In the span of a few days Mary went from an insignificant girl to the most important woman in salvation history. But had not the Holy Spirit revealed this to Elizabeth and her unborn child this fact would have remained hidden. For Mary was yet to be married and neither her pregnancy nor the Virginal Conception was apparent. We may suppose, then, that Mary intended this to be a low-key visitation to her needy relative, simply to offer assistance. But the Holy Spirit revealed it to be far more important and awe-inspiring than an ordinary meeting between two cousins. Who would have thought a seemingly humdrum temporal event would correspond to such an incredible supernatural reality? To the naked eye, nothing seemed different than before. However, through a Spirit-filled perspective, this was so marvellous that an unborn jumped with joy and his mother began to prophesy.

Likewise, we find in the first reading from the Book of Revelation a wondrous heavenly mystery that surrounded Jesus' birth, even as it appeared rather humble and uneventful on earth. In the eyes of the world Mary was an ordinary girl in an obscure town, who married a carpenter and gave birth in a stable as this 'unimportant' woman couldn't even find a room at the inn. It's no wonder then, that upon Jesus' return to his home town, they used Mary's name in a belittling manner, as if to say there couldn't be anything special about this woman or her son. (C.f. Mt 13:55) Yet what did the supernatural vision of the Evangelist reveal in the Book of Revelation? That Mary was the woman "adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown," who gave birth to the Son of God! But the people failed to recognise this as they obstinately refused to perceive beyond their senses and the visible world. On the other hand, anyone who saw the spiritual reality through the eyes of God (e.g. John the Apostle, Elizabeth) could immediately acknowledge Mary to be the Queen of Heaven and the Mother of God.

Subsequently, this begs the question: What does our own spiritual reality look like? Even as we live through a relatively mundane and uneventful day, a lot more could be happening in our soul. Alas, we often neglect our spiritual life, because much of our attention and focus is on the

visible world instead. But if we were to observe the lives of the saints who were in touch with the supernatural, we find even a mundane day could be full of colourful, spiritual happenings. Likewise, the more we are conscious of the same spiritual reality, we may recognise the great battle being waged between God and the devil for our soul – indeed, life can never be a bore! If we only see ourselves as temporal beings, we may not have much to show for. But if we were to adopt a supernatural worldview and a radically Christian perspective on life, we may gain insight into our own ‘revelation’ in which our ordinary earthly experiences reveal deeper spiritual reality and meaning.

The Lord’s lowly handmaid became the Queen, who at the conclusion of her earthly life was assumed body and soul into heaven. God willing, one day we may also enjoy the eternal kingdom in the fullness of our humanity. So we see our future in the Most Blessed Lady of the Assumption. Yet only faith will allow us to recognise our Queen.