

“Mary, Model of Participation in the Mystery of Her Son”  
Homily, Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Plaza, Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption  
August 15, 2020

Most Rev. Salvatore J. Cordileone

Today we celebrate the feast day of our cathedral; St. Mary of the Assumption is our cathedral. So this is an important day in the whole Archdiocese. This is the mother church of the whole Archdiocese. We had, of course, a very different sort of a celebration envisioned quite a while ago when we were planning for this year’s feast of the Assumption because this year was going to be our year of preparation for the 50th anniversary of the dedication of our church, which was May 5th, 1971. But we come together to the extent that we can. We celebrate these Masses on the plaza of our cathedral together – our various Masses – as a public manifestation of our faith, as a reminder of the essential nature of worship in human life.

We come together at these various Masses as a public manifestation of our faith, as a sign of our belief in God, our belief in His Son, Jesus Christ, born of our Blessed Mother, true God and true man, who came to set us free from sin and death and destruction and evil. We need to turn to him if we wish to eradicate evil in our land. We are happy to celebrate this feast day of our cathedral, and as we do so, we, of course, as always, look to Mary as our model of discipleship.

Today, the Solemnity of the Assumption, is a celebration of her glorification. St. Paul speaks about Christ being the first fruits of salvation with his Resurrection from the dead. His mother, too, is a participation in that - the first fruits of his redemption - in that she was preserved free from sin, even the stain of original sin, from the first moment of her conception. And so she did not undergo bodily corruption. This is the common Christian belief from ancient times. Christians, both East and West, have understood this, that the consequence of sin is decay - moral decay, but also bodily corruption. Mary did not undergo that, and so she is assumed body and soul into heaven, the first to participate in the fruits of her Son's Resurrection.

Mary participates all throughout her Son's journey, all throughout the Christ event. And the Church even liturgically commemorates this. We celebrate the day of her birth: as we do at Christmas, the Birth of our Lord, so we celebrate the birth of Mary on September 8th. Our Lord's birth is marked by what we call an octave - one celebration that lasts for eight days. This is in accordance with the Jewish calculation of time. We don't have an octave for Our Lady, but we do have something similar because the next week, on the eighth day after the celebration of her birth, we celebrate on September 15th Our Lady of Sorrows, reminding us of her participation with her Son in his Passion and Death, which we celebrate in Holy Week, and in particular on Good Friday. So on September 15th we celebrate her spiritual death with her Son, her participation in this mystery. Then again at Easter, his Resurrection and later his Ascension, this celebrates his glorification at Easter, which is also celebrated with an octave.

So likewise, we celebrate this Solemnity of the Assumption, which was her participation in her Son's glorification, and also something akin to an octave in that on the eighth day - that is, next Saturday - we celebrate her Queenship, the Crowning of Mary, queen of Heaven and Earth, which is her participation in her Son's reigning over the universe. This mystery we celebrate on the last Sunday of the year, the Solemnity of Christ the King. Mary is the model of discipleship, and we see in her the path to

true glory summed up in this beautiful prayer of her *Magnificat* that the Church has cherished from ancient times.

It's always the lowly whom God chooses to work His great acts of salvation. Mary is the first and foremost example of that. If we wish to be great in God's eyes, if we wish to share in that glorification of Christ, we must walk that path of humility, we must share in Christ's sufferings and offer up our sufferings in union with him so that we might share in that glory.

Let us thank God for this opportunity, as restricted as it is, to come together to worship today. Let us ask him to learn the lesson of humility, how humbly to serve him, putting others first, keeping Christ at the center of our lives so that Christ might be at the center of our society, so that our society might be rid of all evil and sin and corruption and might know the pure loveliness and love of our redeeming God.

Amen.