

Homily: 16th August 2009 – The Feast of the Assumption

There are those occasions in life when we truly feel God at the heart of our being, when we rejoice in how truly amazing God is. My recent experience of ordination to the priesthood - when in a packed out cathedral, the bishop and clergy laid hands on those being ordained – was one such occasion for me - a real cause for rejoicing.

And I'm sure in life you've had those occasions which are great times for rejoicing. In our lives, there are times when we are truly overwhelmed and need to celebrate and tell people about our news - a new job, a new child, or some other particular special occasion. And we can all identify the great things that God has done in us in our lives, when our hearts want to burst with praise.

Our Gospel tells of one such time of rejoicing - that awesome encounter – where Mary has just received the message from the angel Gabriel – she will bear a son – the Son of the Most High. Mary, in anticipation and joy, with feelings of inadequacy, frailty, and maybe even anger, rushes to share her news with Elizabeth.

And in the encounter of the two women, Mary and Elizabeth, the good news is shared, celebrated and lived. Mary is “Full of solemn joy,” It's the joy that sparkles in the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, it's a joy that comes fully to those who are engaged in a life of faith. It is the joy of obedience that leads to celebration.

Mary's journey began in earnest when she embraced the promise of God as brought to her by Gabriel, when she hears

"...nothing will be impossible with God." Mary's response was the key to joy, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Mary's solemn joy is more than worldly happiness, it is heavy with heaven. In her song, Mary reveals that she has chosen to be open to grace. She is resolved to magnify God, to see him as her Saviour, as the Creator of her truest self. She has chosen to let the Lord govern the whole of her being, Christ literally comes to birth within her.

But the mystery of the incarnation us that he is born within every one of us who allows the Lord to govern our whole self in heaven's image. Mary embodies the incarnation that occurs every time we accept God's grace.

Today we keep the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. At the end of her life, Mary, the mother of Christ, was taken body and soul into heaven to be with her son, Christ for ever.

To be assumed means *something that is done to one* – God took Mary. Where she now is, we are meant eventually to be, and may hope to be through Divine grace. Mary is a sign to us that someday, through God's grace, we too may join the Blessed Mother, saints and angels in giving glory to God.

The Assumption is a source of great hope for us too, for it points the way for all followers of Christ who imitate her faithfulness and obedience to God's will. It is truly amazing what God did through Mary. It is truly amazing what God has

done, and is doing through us as individuals, and through us as a congregation.

Our gathering, our worship together is testimony to God's ongoing revelation to, or presence in, the world. Here in the mass we have the visible signs of God's grace - the sacramental or holy - as baptised members of this family through the bread and the wine. These tell of God's love for each one of us - God's healing love - grace offered freely to each one of us. Each day we can begin a new day in Christ, our lives transformed anew by grace.

Over 2000 years ago, Mary believed. Today lives are being transformed through the teachings and love of Jesus. God's grace, God's transforming power, God's newness, is given to us time and time again.

Newness is given in the moment of worship, in receiving the sacrament of the mass. And surely our only response can be, "We proclaim the greatness of God and our spirits rejoice in God our Saviour!"