

HOPE LASTS TOO

In 1950, Pope Pius XII declared Mary's Assumption to be an infallible belief and dogma of the Catholic Church. Why? And why then? Because of the two horrendous wars that Europe had undergone where millions and millions of people were killed, brutalized and tortured. The whole world seemed starved for hope. The Church's answer was to turn to Mary because it was she who had opened the possibility for the coming of the long hoped-for Christ. And it was Christ who restored hope to this fallen world.

Mary was faithful throughout her life and up to the very end. She is there when Jesus is conceived within her by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. She gives birth to him in the stable in Bethlehem and presents him in the Temple forty days later. She is also there at the cross. She is faithful to the end. She fulfilled her role. And it is our faith conviction that she now shares in the resurrection of her son Jesus whom we believe to be the Christ. Despite the hatred, despite the violence, despite the dehumanizing forces of evil in this world--goodness triumphs. Love is victorious. Mary's fidelity mirrors that of her Son and it opens her to the fullness of life. It is to be the same for us too.

Ask yourself this question. Is hope becoming an issue for you? Is hopelessness something you have actually felt at times? Then Mary is the one to whom to turn. Bring your need to her and she will bring it to her Son. Just like she did at the wedding feast in Cana when they ran out of wine. Why not turn to her? Why not trust her? Why not pray to her? If she has been taken up to where Jesus lives and where Jesus reigns with his Father (which is what we believe the Assumption of Mary means), then is it too difficult to believe that she will intercede for you before the Lord?

When Mary noticed the shortage of wine at that wedding and brought the matter to the attention of her Son, she set the stage for him to act. He did act. He transformed 150 gallons of water into 150 gallons of choice wine. The first of his miracles. What Mary did for those in need in that moment, she will do for us in our need. Why? Because she is with her Son now. In heaven. In the kingdom of God. We believe that this has been revealed to us by God himself but it almost makes sense on its own. There is a whole lot more needed today than to replenish the wine supply. Pray to her for hope.

Last year, 2020, there were 83 funeral services from our parish. The most ever in our parish's 135-year history. Every family mourned their loved one. Each family, each person prayed. The hope they prayed for was that the person they loved who had died would now be with God, in heaven, and that they would one day see him or her again in the Kingdom of God. Reunited. What do you believe in your heart of hearts about heaven? Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of heaven many times in his three-years of public ministry. He was not deluding us. He came from God. He knows all about the Kingdom of God. One of the things he came to accomplish was to reveal that there is such a kingdom. That it is of God and in God. It is real. And we are invited to enter into it and to live in it for life everlasting.

The feast of the Assumption is our conviction, revealed to us by God, that God has intervened to bring into heaven Jesus' mother who conceived him of the Holy Spirit. Mary was called by the Archangel Gabriel, Full of Grace. She is full of grace. Then. Now. Forever. She is a human tabernacle in whom the Lord Jesus first lived on this earth. God the Father has a special love for her. God the beloved Son, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth has a special love for her. God the Holy Spirit who overshadowed her has a special love for her. At the end of her life the Trinity will not allow her to undergo corruption. Not her body, not her soul. She is taken into heaven. She follows after her Son and lives with him.

Where she has gone we hope to follow. We hope to follow. We hope. Pray to her for your hope to be restored. She is a woman of hope. She believed. She responded wholeheartedly. She endured her sorrows. She remained steadfast to the end. She hoped—even without seeing. She knows what we face. Let us turn to her and speak to her from our hearts. About our hope. For those we love. And for ourselves. Let us dare to believe that Our Lord Jesus has come precisely to forgive us and to liberate us from all that enslaves us. Let us dare to believe that heaven is real. And that we are the invited guests. Let us dare to believe that we can put on the way of Jesus Christ and live his love in our daily lives. And by doing so we will become his guests, at the banquet, in his Father's house, with Mary—forever.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.