

Column081422

Companions on the Journey

August 14, 2022

Dear Friends,

A number of years ago I remember having a discussion with a Catholic who said that he was always surprised that the Church celebrated the Feast of the Assumption each August because he thought that the Church should only celebrate things she knew or believed to be true. If it was only an assumption...? Folks, I am not making this up. I couldn't. It's just too good.

We don't merely "assume" that Mary was taken into heaven. We believe that she was taken into heaven just as we believe that Jesus was raised from the dead and also ascended into heaven. While Jesus ascends himself he does so precisely as God, in union with the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary, on the other hand, does not ascend into heaven on her own power. She was "taken up" (assumptio, in the Latin) into heaven.

Remember Mary's response to the angel Gabriel in the moment of the Annunciation? She said, "Let it be done unto me as you say." Those words express Mary's fundamental attitude of life for the rest of her life on earth. "Let it be done unto me..." Always receptive. Always accepting. Always appreciative. Always trusting. Mary does not do the doing. Mary is not the one who takes the initiative. It is always God who moves first and Mary is always properly responsive to whatever way God chooses to move.

As I examine my own life, I find some of those elements in myself but not enough of them. As human beings we struggle to be consistently trusting and accepting and receptive and grateful. It is most fitting that the one who was the firstborn from the dead would share his victory over the grave with the one who most believed in him. That would be Mary. Where she has gone we hope to follow. That is what we are offered by putting our faith in Jesus Christ.

But putting faith in Jesus Christ is not easy to do. We all know people who were there once upon a time but who gather with us no longer. The kids are raised or other interests or concerns overtook them or they just kind of lost the sense of the faith. Sometimes they want to come back but don't always know how. If that is the case, we must find ways to help them. They may sense they need to make a good confession but they don't know what they should say or where they should start. Help them. Tell them that they should just go to the sacrament and tell the priest that they are trying to make their way back. He will help them. I always ask people in a situation like that not to confess every sin they can remember but the things that they are sorriest for in their lives, the things they would do over or do differently if they were given the chance. The priest will do the rest.

The Lord Jesus wants so much to be the bread that will sustain us in the difficult journey through life and too often we hold ourselves back or think ourselves unworthy or too far gone to be able to participate worthily. You know, an Act of Contrition (even if you can't remember all the words) goes a long way. And when you get to confession there are laminated cards now that have the form and an Act of Contrition. There are even some inside. Summertime is a good time to take this step. Let the Lord refresh you so that you can say with Mary, "Let it be done unto me as you say."

**In the peace of Christ,
Msgr. McHenry**