

August 15, 2021

2:00 p.m. St. Augustine Cathedral

Assumption of our Blessed Mother into Heaven/Mass with Cursillo members

Praised be Jesus Christ! Alabado Jesu Cristo! (Now and forever!)

Along with our dear Blessed Mother's ancient, and beautiful, Hymn of Praise in which she "proclaims the Greatness of the Lord", as we just heard in today's Gospel, we join together today in that same spirit of giving Praise to Jesus Christ for this Solemn Feast, commemorating the ultimate moment in Mary's blessed and grace-filled life in this world, as we celebrate her Assumption into Heaven.

What makes Mary so special to all of us is that she was a human being----just like each of us is---but with two very important differences.

The first is that she was the only human being ever to be conceived without Original Sin, which is one of the Dogmas of our Catholic Faith---the Immaculate Conception. Because of the role that our Loving God and Father, in His Providence, knew she would have in becoming the human Mother of God's only-begotten Son, no stain of sin could be any part of her, since, by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, she would conceive in her virginal womb the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

And yet, Mary remained completely human, with total freedom of will and intellect.

The second difference is that at the end of our Blessed Mother's life in this world, her body was preserved from burial and decay; instead, she was taken up, body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen of Heaven. The Assumption of the Blessed Mother allows her to singularly participate in her Son's Resurrection, and anticipates what all of us will eventually experience: the

reunification with our glorified bodies at the end of all time. This is one of the other Dogmas of our Faith and the Solemnity that we celebrate today: the 4th Glorious Mystery---the Assumption of Mary.

While the freedom from original sin kept Mary's body and soul pure and free of sins' stains throughout her life, Mary always maintained her freedom to say "Yes" or "No" to God.

Saying "Yes" to God, and "No" to ourselves is never easy, but it's always our choice, as a human being. Mary's greatness is that her answer was always "Yes", "Que se me haga como Dices!" (Let it be done to me as You say), "Fiat!"; unlike ourselves who, sadly, often say "No" to God; "let it be as I say not as You say", or "my will be done".

To be the sinless Mother of the Son of God is the highest honor any human being could ever have; yet Mary was also the first, and most faithful, Disciple of Jesus--- and serves for all of us as the Model of both: being a part of Jesus' Family, but also being His faithful follower and joyful witness in the world to Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

And so, our dear Blessed Mother has always been, and now from her Heavenly vantage point forever remains, our Model for how to live our Faith and how to bear witness to our Faith in the midst of our day-in, day-out responsibilities.

So, how appropriate it is, on this Solemn Feast of our Blessed Mother, that we are able to gather with members of the Cursillo Movement here in our Diocese, who have found the "Cursillos de Cristiandad", or the "short course in Christianity", as such a powerful help in living your lives as faithful and joyful disciples of Jesus.

I am grateful to our two priests here with us, Fr. Dan Hyman and Fr. German Perez-Diaz, along with all those involved in the lay leadership of the Cursillo, and all Cursillistas here with us today, for your participation and, most of all, for all the ways that thru this “movimiento espiritual”, your lives bear the fruit of faithful discipleship in your lives, and also give joyful witness to the strength of your faith in every aspect of your lives---as you live out your “fourth day”/”cuarto dia”.

While our dear Blessed Mother always said “Yes” to God, our ability to say “Yes” to God in every aspect of our lives, as much as we might want to follow her example in that same regard, is somewhat limited because, as our Scripture Readings remind us, we are caught up in a mortal battle of wills: God’s Will is constantly challenged, resisted, and undermined by the Evil One. That Battle began at the moment our first Parents said the Original “No” to God and ate of the Forbidden Fruit because they allowed themselves to be deceived by the Devil, succumbing to the temptation to Pride---to be as good as----NO, BETTER THAN--- God Himself!

So in our First Reading today from the Book of Revelation, St. John captured that image of the mortal battle in the image of the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars....(who) was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth”; and the image of the “huge, red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems....ready to devour the child when the woman gave birth”.

The “woman” is clearly representative of God, and of the “ark of the covenant”, which the Reading tells us can be seen when “Heaven is opened”; the “huge dragon” representing the power of the Evil One and the powers of the unbelieving world, that constantly fight against God’s Plan for our Good and Well-being.

But while the “battle” has been long-standing, the Birth of the Woman’s Child, who is NOT devoured, but protected, and Who ultimately is “Born of the

Woman”, taking on our human nature and, along with His divine Nature, wins the ultimate Victory over any lasting power of Sin or Death.

So while the Evil One persists in his constant attacks against any and all of us trying to be faithful disciples and joyful witnesses of Jesus, He is doomed to be eternally frustrated, because he has been, and is forever defeated. All WE need to do is remain faithful---to say “Yes” to God, and “No” to the Evil One/”No” to sin/”No” to any power or influence to lead us astray.

Jesus is clearly our Savior---He has come to be with us, and He has promised that He will never leave us. “I will remain with you always, even until the end of the ages”.

Jesus has won the Victory; and He remains with us through His Church, in His Sacraments, and most especially, through the precious Gift of the Eucharist.

And Mary remains our Model---our Best Example----of how to remain united with Jesus, and how to be His Faithful Disciple.

Mary, who became the Living Ark of the Covenant as she nurtured the Son of God for 9 months in her virginal womb, and who brought Him forth into this world; she who nourished, guided, formed, and loved Him in this world for 30 years; she who then followed Him faithfully, in joy and in sorrow, all the way to the Foot of the Cross, and His Burial in the Tomb---something no Mother should ever have to do---Mary is the one who shows each of us how to do battle with the Evil One, and how to remain a faithful and loving Disciple of Jesus. We just need to say “Yes”---“Que se me haga como Dices” (Let it be done to me as you say)---“Fiat!”

As wonderful as it is to have Mary as our greatest example, and most ardent Intercessor from her Heavenly Throne, we need the Divine Help, which Jesus

continues to provide for us: the Gift of the Eucharist, and the Power of the Holy Spirit.

As Mary in fact provided her body to be the “Ark of the Covenant” for 9 months in her Virginal womb, we too become “temporary Arks of the Covenant” when we receive into our very hearts Jesus in the Holy Eucharist---Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. And we can find the strength that we need anytime we come to any Catholic Church by spending time with Jesus in the “Ark of the Covenant” that every Tabernacle in the world truly is which reserves the Blessed Sacrament of Jesus Christ.

And so, through Mary’s powerful Example, with Jesus’ Divine Assistance in the Gift of the Eucharist, and by the power of the Holy Spirit----and all of that combined with the strength and support you, who are Cursillistas, find within the Cursillo Movement----you can continue living your “fourth day” each and every day as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, and as joyful witnesses to His Love, Forgiveness, Compassion, and Justice that we are called to give to all people---to see them as Jesus sees them: loved, redeemed, and precious in His sight.

It all begins with saying “Yes” to God, as Mary always did. And it continues with choosing to focus on “magnifying” the Goodness of God, rather than whining about the problems we encounter, or being fearful of all the ways that the Evil One constantly tries to distract us and destroy us.

Right after Elizabeth acknowledges that Mary is the “Ark of the Covenant” ---and that the Unborn Child within Mary’s Womb was the cause for her own unborn child (John the Baptist) to leap for joy, Mary began her Song of Praise to God---the beautiful Magnificat! “My soul proclaims the Greatness of the Lord!”

Mary had plenty of problems, lots of things to worry about, huge issues of great concern, enormous reasons to be afraid----YET, she chose to focus on God’s Goodness, and even to “magnify” the Lord’s goodness. She realizes that even in

the “lowliness of her life as a handmaid---a servant---of the Lord”, that the Lord had chosen to “raise her up”, and that from that day forward, “all generations would call her blessed”, not so much because of her, but because of what the Lord accomplished through her.

So, what does that teach us? Do we remember to praise God? Do we thank Him for the great things He does for us? Do we thank God for each day that we wake up? Do we see each day as another opportunity to offer Him praise? Are we grateful for His mercy, for the countless times He is willing to forgive us?

What do we do in the face of our struggles, sufferings and worries? “Proclaim the greatness of the Lord!” What do we do when we battle our constant temptations to say “No” to God? “Proclaim the greatness of the Lord!” What do we do when we experience financial worries or serious health concerns? “Proclaim the greatness of the Lord!”

The way to have our hearts expanded with love, and our lives filled more with joy, is to regularly allow our souls to “proclaim the greatness of the Lord”---to praise God for His goodness, to thank God for His Son’s Gift of Salvation, and to petition our God to find confidence in knowing that Jesus has won the primordial Battle between good and evil, and we share in the glory of that Victory---as long as we remain faithful.

Let us ask our dear Blessed Mother, the Queen of Heaven for the grace each day to say, with her, “My soul proclaims the Greatness of the Lord”/Mi alma proclama la grandeza del Senor”; and “Que se me haga como Dices”/Let it be done to me as You say.”

“Alabado Jesu Cristo”/ Praised be Jesus Christ!