

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

I take as my text today the Gospel passage from St. Luke, which the **Church** calls the *Magnificat*, specifically these three passages:

He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable unto Thee, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer.

As we commemorate the death of the **Blessed Virgin Mary** with this oftentimes controversial feast day of the **Church**, we may be perplexed by the Gospel passage appointed. We tend to associate this passage with all that leads up to the **Nativity of our Lord**, and, indeed, it is a powerful passage that has become one of the most beautiful hymns, the *Magnificat*, which, in the **Book of Common Prayer**, follows the First Lesson of Evening Prayer.

We might ask why this beautiful hymn on this occasion. What does it have to do with the death, or the *falling asleep* of the **Mother of our Lord**?

To find some answer, we must think of the life of **Mary**. She was, throughout her life, a symbol of humility. Above all, she submitted her will to the **Will of God**. She placed herself entirely in **God's Hands**. She was perhaps somewhere around 14 or 15 years of age, yet she showed wisdom beyond her young years, not only wisdom but faith beyond measure. **Mary** may not have fully understood the magnitude of her action while, at the same time, most likely understanding the possible ramifications of a young girl with child outside of marriage. What would Joseph say, to whom she was betroth? What about her family? Would they disown her?

With all the unknowns, **Mary** offered up herself to God to be the vessel he needed in order to redeem his Creation, to redeem us!

This beautiful hymn based on **Mary's** response to the greeting from Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, so eloquently expresses the magnitude of God's interaction with the world, especially with humankind.

Indeed, the *Magnificat* has been deemed as the most revolutionary document in the world, as it beautifully expresses three of God's revolutions brought about through the *Incarnation*.

The first is a *moral* revolution where God through Jesus Christ has dealt a deathblow to human pride — *he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*.

God chose this lowly girl to be the mother of his Son — chose her, rather than someone of nobility, as was expected, chose this simple maiden, rather than someone who of vain pride had contempt for those of lower status.

Through Christ born in humble surroundings, God provides a mirror for us to see ourselves in relation to his example. We see ourselves for what we are in comparison to our Lord and Saviour. Do not misunderstand — this comparison is not based solely on whether a person is monetarily rich or poor, of noble versus a lowly birth, but, more to the point, on what we may call human pride, on what is in our heart.

At the same time, we see in this hymn a *social* revolution: ***He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.***

Simply, Jesus Christ died on the **Cross** for all of us, regardless of our status in life. He did not die for the rich, nor did he die for the poor. He died for all of us, thus breaking down the barriers that separate us from one another, for in Christ we are one.

And, amidst the beauty of the *Magnificat*, we see a pragmatic element — we see an *economic* revolution: ***He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.***

Again, simply put, in a Christian society, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, are not pitted against one another. We each provide for the other in various ways to alleviate suffering from poverty, while not taking advantage of weakness. We are not talking about income equality, rather what we are seeing is that God, through the example of his Son, breaks down economic barriers, just as he does social barriers.

In all of the three revolutions we find in the *Magnificat*, we see most beautifully expressed the working of God as he sends into the world his Son, Jesus Christ, to bring about a true revolution, a *Christian Revolution* as it was to be called. He does this through the **Blessed Virgin Mary**, who gave herself to him as a vessel, a means to accomplish the salvation of mankind and to reconcile all of his Creation to himself.

So, we may conclude that this Gospel passage is, indeed, most appropriate as we celebrate her passing from life here on earth to life eternal with her Son, the Son of God, God Incarnate.

Indeed, the Church has called the **Virgin Mary**, rightfully, the *Mother of God*, in Greek, **Theotokus**, for in her womb was conceived the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, not disputing that Jesus Christ was preexistent. But that it was the only way God could be among us, experience our humanity, redeem us from the power of sin, and reconcile us to himself.

We celebrate the *Dormition*, the *Falling Asleep of the Virgin Mary*; whether she was bodily assumed into Heaven is left to individual belief but certainly it is within the realm, the power of God, to do so.

This is all that is required of us as Christians to believe of the **Virgin Mary**, who we call **Blessed**, as did the Angel Gabriel, as did Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, as have Christians for centuries.