

Come Holy Spirit... Fill the hearts of your faithful.

When I was in high school, on the first day of my freshman literature class, Miss Jelnick taught that literature and music and movies usually carried a deeper meaning or significance than was immediately apparent. She said that they usually hid in plain sight. That is, once one understands the context of the times portrayed, the places and situations, and the players, then the deeper meaning can be appreciated without too much difficulty. And she proceeded, over the next four years to teach us to understand that.

Many stories, songs, poems and films do portray the human pathos and nature. They touch us, not just because of their emotional power, but because we see ourselves and the human condition in them – these are the bits and pieces of culture that stand the test of time.

Shakespeare will always remain relevant, while Steven King, though a very talented writer, will not. Romeo and Juliet is more than a love story, Macbeth is much more than murder and intrigue.

This Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary is such a thing. It has meanings and importance that has, and will stand the test of time, in fact, all of time.

The Assumption of Mary celebrates the taking up (the assuming) of Our Lady, body and soul into Heaven at the time of her falling asleep in the Lord.

Even though Mary is spoken about in the first reading, and she speaks in the Gospel... this day is NOT about Mary. The message of God for today is hiding in plain sight.

I want to, briefly, open up our first scripture from Revelation to show you what I mean. Here is where context plays a vital part of understanding what it is about.

John tells his readers that he has seen the Ark of the Covenant. Now the Ark had been missing for several hundred years, so the when John says he has seen it, it gets everyone's attention. And he immediately tells of a

vision of a “a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” Yet he has not changed subjects at all. He is telling us that this woman is herself the Ark of the New Covenant.

The original ark held the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the Ten Words as ancient Israel called them. It held a jar of manna, the bread-like substance given to sustain life in the wilderness and the rod or staff of Aaron, that miraculously bloomed with flowers and almonds to designate the Tribe of Levi as the priestly tribe.

We rightly place the identity of this “woman” in Revelation as Mary and her male child as Jesus. So why would John identify her as the Ark? Within her womb, she carried all of what was in the original, but in every way superior. She did not carry the Ten Words, but THE word of God made flesh. The bread of the desert is surmounted by the Bread of Life and the staff by the Cross, the sign of the eternal sacrifice of the eternal High Priest.

The focus is not on the Woman, but contextually, on the contents of the ark... on Jesus.

You and I wouldn't get it right away, but John's audience would. Again, context is important.

Our Gospel is more transparent. Even though Mary proclaims that all generations will call her Blessed, it is only because of what **God** did for her, for his people Israel, and for us. She is blessed because God has blessed her. Christ has redeemed her.

Mary is an example for us that we have a God who keeps His promises. The promises of redemption and salvation given throughout the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary.

Her willing consent at the Annunciation is a reminder to us that you and I have a participation in the Salvation of the world. It calls us to radical love of neighbor and obedience to the will of God.

But it is her assumption that is a sure sign of the fulfillment of this salvation promised by Christ: the resurrection.

The words of St. Paul in today's second reading hold the key to our understanding:

“Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through man, the resurrection of the dead came also through man. For just as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life”

Death, disease and decay are all powerless in the promise of God that Mary bears witness to. Hope and victory are ours through the resurrection of Jesus.

Mother Mary and Saints John and Paul remind us today that the completion of the promise of God is bigger and better than we could imagine.