

## FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION - 2017

In light of Father Rob's homily this past weekend I want to tell you all right from the start that neither Dinah nor I have seen the new Wonder Woman Movie. In truth, the thought had never even occurred to me – to see the movie, nor have I tried to find her on the TV, or search for old comic books about her exploits. Now if this reflects a character flaw on my part, well so be it.

In contrast to this fictional wonder woman, we celebrate today the feast of a very real and very wondrous woman, the likes of which the world has never seen.

Today's Feast of the Assumption is often depicted in beautiful art work usually showing the Blessed Mother being lifted up into the clouds on the back of an angel; other angels seem to rise with her, while a group of apostles, standing on firm ground, look up at the amazing sight.

Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption in 1950 although it had been the consistent and ancient belief of the church: Stated simply, the Church teaches, and we believe, that at the end of her life on earth, Mary went to heaven, body and soul.

Who is this wondrous woman Mary? How do we picture her? Our First Reading and our Gospel present two contrasting views of Mary.

In the first reading, John's vision of the woman giving birth, is traditionally associated with Mary. It's easy to see why. The woman is undoubtedly a great queen, clothed as she is with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of 12 stars. Her child, the one who is "destined to rule all the nations," is "caught up to God and his throne," while the woman herself flees to a place prepared by God in the desert.

The Mary in this scene is extravagant, dramatic, and powerful; she is a mature woman who has experienced the joys and sorrows of life.

In contrast, the Mary that Luke describes is a young girl—not much more than a child really; poor and humble. She has just arrived at the home of her much older cousin Elizabeth, who, miraculously, is also with child. It has only been a short time since Mary was asked to be the Mother of God, so she is still coming to terms with what has happened to her.

To be sure, Mary has some idea of the enormity of her situation—her recitation of the beautiful Magnificat makes that clear—still, she is young and inexperienced.

She cannot possibly comprehend how irrevocably her life has changed and will continue to be changed by the child growing within her.

The second portrait of the very young Mary is depicted in our beautiful Marian Shrine to my right.

Mary is reaching out to us with her left hand, while her right hand clutches her garments. This sculpture along with the Christ of Compassion were produced by Mr Wiktor Szostalo who installed them two years after our building was dedicated. I don't know about you but I don't spend enough time over there.

In the end maybe like us sometimes, Mary is a bit of a contradiction – she is a multitude of things - a woman and a young girl, the great queen and the lowly handmaid. Mary is both humble and clothed with the sun; poor and wearing a crown of 12 stars. Her feet are firmly on the earth and on the moon; she is joyful and in pain.

Our readings confirm that Mary is all of this. And by extension, so are we.

We are: rich and poor, experienced and naïve, powerful and weak, joyful and despondent, faithful yet questioning.

Mary offers us a beautiful example of faith-not blind faith, but a confident statement that we must rely on God no matter how outrageous his plan for us might seem.

Despite her confusion, Mary trusted in God's vision for her life. When we're uncertain, afraid, or overwhelmed, we can take comfort that the Lord fulfills his promises and has great plans for us. Mary is blessed and so are we.

Paul in our reading from 1 Corinthians assures us that we will one day share the same gift that Mary received at the end of her life. Just as we all die in Adam, so too in Christ shall all be brought to life. Jesus has risen and so on the last day we will rise with him to share in his glory, like Mary.

Above all Mary was available to God. And when you are available to God, then God's activity becomes possible in us. Everything becomes possible:

- A virgin can become the wellspring of new life
- The barren become fertile
- An old extinguished life does new things

- Sinners are forgiven
- The lost are found
- The last are first
- And a voiceless unborn child can be the first to recognize the presence of the Messiah in the world.

Through Mary's yes, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Mary brought Jesus to us. God became man through her. Mary continued that yes throughout her life. The Assumption freed Mary to mother all of us for all time. Mary – Wonder Woman!