

SUNDAY PLUS

Rejoice in God

Exalting the lowly

By Fr Denis McBride
C.Ss.R.

The dogma of the Assumption, proclaimed in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, has its origins in the popular faith of the Christian community. The definition states that Mary enjoys eternal life with her Son, a goal that we all hope to attain eventually.

We may understand the Assumption of Mary in the images of today's first reading: "a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with twelve stars on her head for a

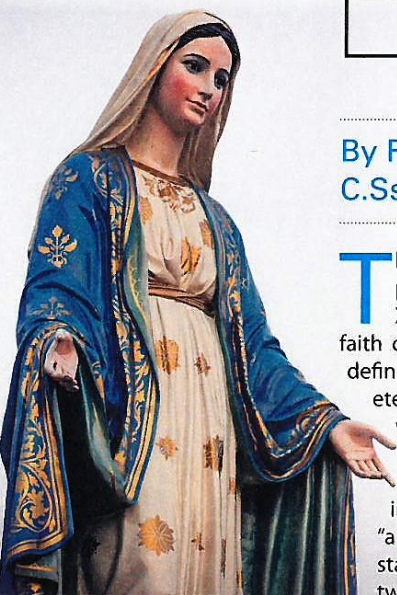
crown". However we imagine Mary's Assumption, we always return to the simple portrait of her in the pages of the Gospel, where she is neither an earthbound star nor a heavenly queen. In Luke's *Magnificat* Mary is the lowly handmaid who rejoices in the loving look of God her saviour and blesses him for the great things he accomplishes in her.

In the *Magnificat* we see Mary as the radical woman. She is the woman who hungers for a new justice on earth, one that reflects the justice of God. The God who did not overlook her is the God who dethrones the mighty and exalts the lowly. In this dispensation the

hungry are filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. Mary voices a contrary wisdom. She voices a radical protest against what we all take for granted: that the mighty will always prevail over the weak, that the well-fed nations will thrive while others starve to death, that the politically strong will always occupy the thrones of power.

Such is the woman we celebrate today. Such are her profound hopes. So, in turn, ours should be.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk



"[Mary] was the first to believe in the Son of God and is the first to be assumed into heaven in body and soul. She was the first to gather Jesus in her arms when he was still a boy and is the first to be gathered in his arms to be introduced into the eternal Kingdom of the Father. Mary, a humble and simple maiden from an isolated village on the edge of the Roman Empire, precisely because she received and lived the Gospel, is allowed by God to be beside the Son's throne for eternity. This is how the Lord puts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts those of low degree.

Pope Francis

The woman who heard the word of God and kept it

By Edward Sri

"[Mary] perseveres in faith throughout her life. She gathers with the apostles for prayer even after her son's ascension (see Acts 1:14). Thus, the New Testament presents a clear portrait of Mary as the first and pre-eminent disciple of Christ, who hears the word of God and keeps it in her heart.

Since one of the blessings promised to all faithful disciples is victory over death, it is

fitting that Mary, who is the first and model disciple of Christ, would be the first to receive this blessing. Catholics thus believe that the privilege of resurrection promised to all faithful Christians was given first to Mary and in a totally unique way.

While the rest of us hope to have our bodies raised to glory at the end of time, Mary experienced the resurrection and glorification of her body at the moment her earthly life ended. Thus, her assumption—which flows from her unique participation in Christ's victory as the mother of the Saviour and as the first and most faithful of Christ's followers—anticipates to some degree our own share in the fullness of that victory if we persevere as followers of Christ."

Edward Sri is an American theologian.

Feast of the week
Monday 15 May

The Assumption
of the Blessed
Virgin Mary

Christ visited the body of Mary, and said:
"Come my sweet, come my flower,
Come my dove, come my bower,
Come, my mother, now with me,
For heaven's Queen I make thee."

Then the body sat up, bowed to Christ, and said:
"My sweet son, with all my love
I come with you to heaven above:
Where you are now, let me be
For all my love I lay on thee."

Middle English poem about the Assumption

Lord God, you are love itself. As we celebrate the moment in time when you accepted your mother into eternity, we also remember her care for your Son and for each one of us. Lord, help us to imitate her. Amen.

Today:
Apocalypse
11:19; 12:1-6. 10
1 Corinthians 15:20-26
Luke 1:39-56

(I) Jeremiah
38:4-6. 8-10
Hebrews 12:1-4
Luke 12:49-53

Monday:
Ezekiel 24:15-24
Matthew 19:16-22

(I) Apocalypse
11:19; 12:1-6. 10
1 Corinthians 15:20-26
Luke 1:39-56

Tuesday:
Ezekiel
34:1-11
Matthew
19:23-30

Wednesday:
Ezekiel
34:1-11
Matthew
20:1-16

Thursday:
Ezekiel
36:23-28
Matthew
22:1-14

Friday:
Ezekiel
37:1-14
Matthew
22:34-40

Saturday:
Ezekiel
43:1-7
Matthew
23:1-12

Next Sunday:
Isaiah 66:18-21
Hebrews 12:5-7. 11-13
Luke 13:22-30