

# BULLETIN 23

## THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

I read recently that if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans! Well I had planned that this year we would celebrate our Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady in style. Maybe a shared lunch or picnic on the lawn, social gathering of some sort. This is not to be, yet another consequence of Covid 19. I do hope however that we can all gather together for the mass this Sunday either in person or by live stream and celebrate our Parish life, thanking God for all he has done for us in the past and will gift us with his grace for the future.

May Our Blessed Mother pray for us all,

God Bless

Fr. John

### OUR WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Sun 16 – Assumption BVM	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish Our Hospital
Tue 18 – St. Helena	1030 Rosary	
Wed 19 – Feria	1000 Mass (Ord)	Tess Hogan (RIP)
Thu 20 – St. Bernard	1000 Mass 1030 Adoration	John Hogan (RIP)
Fri 21 – St. Pius X	1000 Mass 1030 Stations	for Vocations
Sun 23 – 21 of the Year	1000 Mass 1800 Mass	People of the Parish

### GOSPEL REFLECTION

*“The Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name.”*

Fifty years or so ago, there was great rivalry between the United States of America and the Soviet Union in the area of space exploration, especially as to which country would be the first to reach the moon. The Soviets sent the first astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, into orbit around the earth, and, when that mission had been successfully completed, triumphantly proclaimed that there was no God, otherwise their cosmonaut would have seen the deity.

Whether this claim was true or not, the ability of human beings to go beyond what people on earth call the sky certainly posed questions about what we Christians believe and what our beliefs actually mean. The two dogmas of our faith which are most directly affected in this way are the ascension of Jesus and the assumption of

the Blessed Virgin Mary. The difficulties which arise from a physical understanding of these events, such as the question “Where is Mary now?” do not disprove the core teaching but rather suggest that perhaps we need to understand its meaning in a different way.

The Gospels tell us little about the mother of Jesus: this is because the evangelists are not writing biographies of Jesus, but rather expressing through story what they believe about him. All other characters appear in relation to Jesus and his mission: the writers have no interest in anyone else, not even his mother, simply for their own sake. Luke presents Mary as the model disciple of Jesus, one who listens to God’s word, reflects on it and then puts it into practice. Today’s Gospel episode is not an example of Mary’s thoughtfulness and generosity in going to look after Elizabeth when she learns that her cousin is unexpectedly pregnant: she visits the mother of John the Baptist to confirm that the message she has received from the angel Gabriel is in fact true. Elizabeth’s expecting a child is the sign to Mary that Mary can rely on the experience she has had as being God communicating divine revelation to her and not something she has dreamed or simply imagined.

The meeting of the two cousins is a celebration of what God is doing with and through them. Elizabeth stands in the tradition of the mothers of the Hebrew tradition who gave birth to significant figures in the story of God’s dealings with Israel. God intervened to enable these hitherto barren women to conceive and bear a child: this miraculous event emphasises the importance of their offspring in God’s plan for the people. John the Baptist is the last of these figures: there is no suggestion that Mary is in any way incapable of conceiving in the natural way, and this points to the birth of Jesus being of a uniquely different order. However, it is not in Mary being the physical mother of Jesus that her importance lies for Luke. Later in his Gospel, a woman cries out from the crowd, “Happy the womb that bore you”, but Jesus replies, “Still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!” This is not a criticism, because the evangelist has told us already that this description fits Mary, the model disciple.

The Gospel tradition tells us little about Mary and nothing in regard to the end of her life. The Eastern Churches hold the doctrine of the Dormition, which means that she simply fell asleep. We might understand the teaching of our Church in the following way: when the Blessed Virgin, whom sin had never touched in any way, had come to the end of her life on earth, God took her as a complete human being into God’s presence.

Where is heaven? Perhaps we might think about it not so much as a *place* but rather as a *state of being*: it means being in the direct presence of God. Whenever we recite the Apostles’ Creed together, we say that we believe in “the communion of saints”. By this we declare that we are, in some way, united with all those disciples of Jesus before us, down through the ages. First among those disciples is Mary, not because she was the physical mother of Jesus: rather, she was attentive to the word of God and put it into practice. So, if we want an ideal follower to imitate, then Mary is our example; and in her assumption, we see the future glory God has in store for those who try their best to live by the teachings of Jesus.

