

+Feast of the Assumption

Homily pronounced on August 15, 2024
Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey

*Homily of the Right Reverend Dom Philip Anderson, Abbot of Clear Creek Abbey
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Blessed be the Lord who made heaven and earth, who hath directed thee to the mortal wounding of the head of the prince of our enemies (Judith).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
My very dear sons,

On this glorious feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, many splendid and glorious things are presented to the eyes of our soul: a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet; the visit made by Mary to her cousin Elizabeth, when she intoned her *Magnificat*; the spectacle of angels rejoicing as they receive their Queen into the blessed precincts of Heaven; finally, the bride described in Psalm 44, adorned with gilded clothing surrounded with variety. And all of these sacred images have a spiritual meaning, not only for the Church in general, but also for each one of us. Let us explore a few of these aspects in relation to the Church in our own day.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, who is both a “type” of the Church and an individual human being, such as we are, is the woman that God constantly lifts up. He lifted her up in her Immaculate Conception. He lifted her up at the Annunciation, bestowing upon her a miraculous and Divine motherhood. He lifted her up to stand at the foot of the Cross neither to faint nor to fall. He lifted her up to be Queen of the Apostles and of the Church; lastly, He lifted her up in death, preserving her from the corruption of the tomb.

Looking around us, peering over the monastery wall, it seems as though all things are falling down. Politicians by and large, along with the “movers and shakers” of a shattered culture, seem to have no rest until they have cast down into the mud whatever is left of noble ideals and courageous endeavors—worse yet, they are building a high tech stairway to the infernal regions. There are even more extreme evils. In Oklahoma City, some years ago, a group of lost souls decided to celebrate a kind of blasphemous imitation of Holy Mass and to attempt to desecrate the Blessed Virgin Mary. Now this sort of thing is not new in itself, but the fact that public officials allowed it to happen openly is a sorry commentary on the state of the nation. The more recent scandal of the opening of the Olympic Games in France added a new degree of infamy.

In all truth, those who would desecrate a statue of the Immaculate One or mock the Last Supper only sully themselves in the most shameful way. In fact, the immaculate beauty of the Mother of God stands out all the more strikingly against this dark background of ignorance and sin. Such crimes *do* demand reparation, however, and it is up to all of us to offer prayers and sacrifices to God, in union with the sufferings of Christ and of His Mother, as the means by which these harmful acts will be relegated to the dustbin of forgotten history and into the oblivion of the underworld.

On such a glorious day as the feast of the Assumption, in which we see the true exaltation of Woman at her best, it is good to remember how that tiny, delicate, snowy foot of the young Mary, the true Judith, by the power of her Son, crushes forever the head of the old Serpent, making definitive the defeat of all the proud legions that once rebelled against the just and merciful order of Heaven. If foolish human beings continue to follow Lucifer into a rebellion against God, the fallen angel himself knows that he is utterly condemned to the blind existence of a place where nothing matters at all save

the eternal effects of Divine Law. How the evil spirits fear that delicate foot of Mary! May it descend upon the evils of our time and free our decadent society from the bonds of false ideas so we can move again, as a nation, with the Church, in the direction of the light. And it will happen—sooner or later.

In fact, Our Lady in her Assumption is already beyond the finish line. She has won the same victory as her Son. And she carries us, in spiritual hope if not yet in our material circumstances, into that serene region, where there are no more tears or wars or sacrilegious crimes. There is a true wisdom, as we continue to move through this battleground of life, to have our hearts already with hers. As the Collect of today's feast says it so well, we ask that, "with our gaze ever intent upon the things above, we merit to be sharers in her glory."

In today's reading from Saint Luke we have what might be called, truly, though not properly speaking, the Gospel according to the Blessed Virgin Mary. This is her *Magnificat*, a prophetic canticle that foreshadowed—even before the Birth of Our Lord—the Beatitudes her Son was to preach, when He reached the fullness of his age on earth. There is a striking similarity between this song of Mary's and the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Both speak of blessedness, not in the terms familiar to the world, that is to say the blessedness of material wealth and power, but rather the blessedness of poverty in spirit and of holy humility.

Are we hungry in our day for justice to be done and for the deviant politicians to be thrown out on their ears? Just listen to Our Lady in her magnificent *Magnificat*: "He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart."¹ Do we look with no little anxiety for God's mercy on so many confused people—especially the young—who are going down the road to their own spiritual death? "Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him."² The *Magnificat* is a sterling program for social reform, although couched in the language of the prophets and not in that of modern philosophers. We just have to translate.

Many today are also confused about what is happening in the Church herself. This is surely a grave problem; however, in all truth, the Church is still herself, in all her mystery and her beauty—herself and nothing else. The difficulty usually lies with our own pride: our wanting to judge persons and events in function of privileged information we may have, our ideas about what is *really going on*, behind the scenes. And where do we get our inside information? From the internet, usually, where rules as sovereign the Prince of this world himself! Not that all in the cyber world is evil. The Church herself makes discreet uses of this now necessary modern means of communication. But we fool ourselves, thinking we can obtain higher access to what is *really* happening through certain "experts"—people who seem to share our concerns—but who are, all too often, the blind leading the blind. If we really want to escape the confusion and anguish that is much abroad these days in ecclesiastical matters (coming to us at the speed of light), much relief can be had, simply by turning off the internet connection for a few days. There are real problems, indeed, not in the essence of the Church but in certain churchmen; there are real problems, but there have always been problems, beginning with Judas, who was an Apostle. The point is that, in our day, the real problems are hard enough, without adding *virtual* problems that are often little more than high tech gossip. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."³

Above all let us devote ourselves, consecrate ourselves to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Assumption, Our Lady of Fatima, Mother of the Church; and let us take up our abode in her Immaculate Heart. That is the one true "win-win" situation. That is our victory over the darkness of the age. Amen. Alleluia.

¹ Lk 1:46-54.

² Ibid.

³ Mk 4:9.