August 15th: Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Gospel text (*Lk* 1:39-56): Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever." Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior"

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Today, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary—body and soul—into heaven. "Today," says Saint Bernard, "the Virgin, full of glory, is taken up to heaven, showering the celestials beings with joy." And he adds these beautiful words: "What a magnificent gift our earth sends to heaven today! In this marvelous exchange of friendship—of giving and receiving—human and divine meet, earthly and heavenly are united, the humble and the sublime are joined. The most precious fruit of the earth is now there, in the place from which the finest and most valuable gifts come. Raised to the heights,

the Blessed Virgin will now pour out her gifts upon humanity."

The first gift she offers you is the Word—the Word she kept with such fidelity in her heart, making it bear fruit in the profound, welcoming silence of her soul. With this Word dwelling in her inner being, and bearing the Life for all men within her womb, "Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth" (Lk 1:39–40). Mary's very presence radiates joy: "For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy" (Lk 1:44), exclaims Elizabeth.

Above all, Mary gives us the gift of her praise—her own joy turned into song—her Magnificat: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior…" (Lk 1:46–47). What a magnificent gift heaven returns to us today in the song of Mary—now forever part of the Word of God! In this hymn, we find the keys to understanding how the human and the Divine, the earthly and the heavenly, are joined together, and how we, like Mary, are called to respond to the gift God gives us in His Son, through His holy Mother: to become a gift from God to the world, and—one day—a gift from mankind to God, following the example of Mary, who goes before us in the glory to which we are all destined.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "The feast of the Assumption of our Lady prompts us to acknowledge the basis for this joyful hope. Yes, we are still pilgrims, but our mother has gone on ahead, where she points to the reward of our efforts. She tells us that we can make it. And, if we are faithful, we will reach home." (Saint Josemaría Escrivá)

- "On this Solemnity of the Assumption let us look to Mary: She opens us to hope, to a future full of joy and teaches us the way to achieve it: welcoming in faith: by welcoming her Son with faith; by never losing the friendship with him but letting ourselves be illuminated and guided by his word" (Benedict XVI)

- "The Most Blessed Virgin Mary, when the course of her earthly life was completed, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven, where she already shares in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 974)