

St Pius-St Anthony Assumption of BVM Aug 15 Sun Year B

The things you do when you are a kid! *(Please keep in mind that when I use these driving stories, it was a long time ago and in a day when there was only a fraction of the traffic and vehicle volume we see today).* But we kids always looked for a reason to get into the family car. Behind the wheel (even if it just meant only starting the car!) for example, in winters, we would ask, 'Mom-Dad, do you want me to go start the car and have it warming up for us?' (I'd say we did it in summer, too but I'm not sure cars all came with AC back then-if driving, you turned up the AC by speeding up!) But sometimes we stretched it by asking, 'Do you want me to go start the car and back it out of the garage?' I must confess, that also meant backing it down our gravel driveway to the front porch door, but inevitably, we might be in the lane a little crooked, so go ahead & pull it up and back it back straightening it this time-Right? (Kids will always find reasons, like asking, 'Oh, did I turn that light out in the garage? I'll just pull up again and see!) But what I'm leading to is this: When those requests didn't pan out into some behind the wheel drive time, this one would: 'Mom, Dad do you want us to wash the car & vacuum it out?' That meant pulling it into the yard a little closer to the hose and electric outlet. But a lot of the time, afterward, we pulled the car back into the garage and like kids we moved straight on to other things. And Mom would have to call to us, "Now guys, **finish the job**. Put everything back into place (vacuum back where it goes, sponge & bucket, cloth towels, Windex etc, put it all back where they came from). 'Finish what you started', she'd say. 'Finish what you started'.

I think that is a good summary of what today's feast of the Assumption of Mary is about: God finishing what He started. When we consider Mary's life, we have to say that she is uniquely and singularly blessed by God above all other human beings. I find two of those unique blessings resulting from her role as the Mother of Our Savior, is that God gave her a step up, He lifted her up with special graces upon her 1) entering this world and 2) leaving this world (which constitutes our two special Catholic doctrines about Mary. First her Immaculate conception, and then her Assumption body and soul into heaven at the time of her going to sleep in Christ-passing here on earth). Ask yourself: 'Was Mary's role and place in human history the most unique?' Well, absolutely. Think about the closeness, the intimacy she shared with Jesus, being His physical house-home for those 9 months of pregnancy. They actually shared the same food & life, growing flesh together and having the exact same blood flowing through both of their veins (through the placenta) in those days. That has to give her physicality a unique edge over the rest of us. So we believe God uniquely in the beginning brought her into the world without the stain of original sin, and in the end allowed to her to pass right on from this earthly life by His assuming her body & soul on into heavenly glory (sparing her the natural human decomposition we all experience in graves). By blessing her with this grace, God also offers all of us other disciples a glimpse forward of what can be in store for us-on the day of resurrection our own possible share in glorified, heavenly bodies-as we say in

every creed –resurrection of the body (or St Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:35ff – glorified bodies). On one level it all ties together making sense. Mary as the mother of Jesus (God) is unique! Who else can claim such closeness and knowledge of Christ? Mary above all is the closest human person to the Lord: the **Most blessed among us!** Mary is called just this by the Angel Gabriel announcing Mary in Luke 1:28 as “Hail, full of grace, and in 1:30 as ‘favored’. Verse 1:35 goes on to say the ‘Holy Spirit will come upon you- & Most High overshadow you’. Then Elizabeth prophesies in verse 1:42 Mary as ‘**most blessed among women**’ and in 1:43 as ‘Mother of my Lord’. (Doesn’t stop there, as Simeon will prophesy in the Temple, Mary’s unique role sharing in Christ’s ministry-Luke 2:35). So, it should not surprise us that Mary is most blessed, most gifted among us humans given unique and singular graces from God. Yes, she is special. Who else mothered Jesus into this world, staying by his side, standing by his cross & tomb at the end?

But greatest about Mary, is this: her humility. Her response says it all: ‘I am the Handmaid-Servant of the Lord’ (Lk 1:38). She wants no attention and always points us to Jesus. She brought Him to us, introduced us to Him, and then she steps off the stage like a good servant. Like when she tells the attendants at the Wedding in Cana, ‘Do whatever He tells you!’ (Jn 2:5). Mary points the attendants to Jesus, and steps back, responding as any good, humble, meek servant does. I’ll help, serve and then get out of the way so my Master can do His saving work. So, it makes perfect sense to me that Mary physically exits this earth of ours completely at her passing, so the disciples of Jesus may not be distracted by her own bodily presence still somewhere here on earth. A good question about this feast is “Does a tomb of Mary exist here?” Well, in fact two ancient sites in Jerusalem claim to be the location place of her ‘transitus’: a shrine at the foot of the Mount of Olives, venerated by Eastern Orthodox Church, and the Western Benedictine Shrine of the Dormition on Mt Zion. But aside from the disputed location, **the point is that both shrines are empty-no body!** So I find it perfectly fitting that the Blessed Mother steps aside (being assumed body-soul out of here) allowing herself to be completely in the hands of the Living God- He took her on home (much like we can see in the case of Elijah also a transition period; though his exit is more dramatic with fireworks-the ‘blazing chariot and all’-2 Kgs 2:11) But above all, I want to close by emphasizing Mary’s splendidly humble response to all of this special grace. We heard her prayer of God’s praise- the Magnificat –in today’s gospel. In it, Mary attributes any uniqueness, any specialness, any recognition, any glory shown her, she refers it all to God. She repeatedly and absolutely credits God with all glory. We could take each line and show how Mary refuses glory and directs all recognition to God. For example, she basically says in Luke chapter 1:46 that **any greatness is the Lord’s**, in verse 47, **that her joy is God being her Savior**. In verse 48 that **her blessing is her lowliness**. In verse 49, that **any great thing done with her shows God’s holiness**. And this can be shown in every line (the lowly lifted up..... in verse 52- assumed up?) With each verse, Mary

points out her dependence and total trust in God almighty. Mary's greatness is her peaceful humility (Just as she stated in the beginning 'Let it be done to me according to your word'). So, Mary's assumption body and soul, is God's taking her home. She who was for nine months the physical home for the infant Jesus, Well, God finishes that job of her earthly work (as she pointed us to Christ) by assuming her, taking her on up into heavenly glory. And our hope is that we can follow her humble example of service to Christ. And that come the completion of our lives of service (our work of faith) we too can be rewarded with the grace of sharing in resurrected bodies, lifted up in heavenly glory.