

Cycle C 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time - Assumption 2016 Deacon Patrick D. Snyder  
(Using readings from the Assumption)

Today we are getting a little ahead of ourselves and delving into Monday and the Feast of the Assumption. Last year we looked at why we know that Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven. Today I would like to explore some of the amazing imagery in our first reading from the Book of Revelations, and look at healing and our society.

Woman, such a simple title, something we think we know about, after all over 50% of the people on this Earth are women. We also know the rest of us are still trying to understand them and usually failing. But I digress. The central character in this reading is the Woman.

Woman; Mary the Mother of God, Mary the mother of the Church, Mary the spiritual mother of the Apostles, Mary, our mother given to us by her Son while he hung suffering on the Cross for our sins. Mary the path for all conversion, Mary the first Tabernacle, Mary the first Christian, Mary, who without her simple fiat, 'let it be done to me' we wouldn't be here celebrating this feast. Mary, the innocent child of Anne and Joachim.

Woman, our mother in heaven pure in body and soul who watches out for us with her prayers, the one whose love for us is only exceeded by her Son's love for us.

Woman; the Church endowed with the Word of the Father, whose brightness outshines the sun. Our spiritual home, the place, the people, the body we can come to for peace, comfort and healing. The place, the body, the people to whom we should offer peace, comfort and healing.

Woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon with a crown of 12 stars. Woman adorned by the radiance of her Son, mother of the church whose brilliance shines around her, standing on maternal dignity and feminine beauty, her crown the image of the 12 Apostles and the 12 Tribes of Israel.

Groaning of the Woman; the faithful of Israel calling out for the messiah; Woman, the Church attacked by the devil for proclaiming Jesus, during the time when John wrote this passage, today and until the second coming.

The woman who flees into the desert, the Early Church who flees the persecution in Jerusalem, the Church today as she makes her way in a world driven by slavery to the senses, sin and death.

We live in a society that decides the difference between good and evil by popular acclimation. Murdering your child in the womb is now a right. Exercise your God given right, your duty to practice your religion in the workplace and you can be fired or lose your business. I don't need to go on, I hope we all recognize how warped our societal logic has become.

Do we think that God, that Mary turns a blind eye to our shenanigans? Dig into the Old Testament and we will see time and time again that God disciplined Israel when they drifted too far from his law. We, the Church living in this country are God's chosen people as well. We have been so richly blessed with individual freedom, unprecedented in history; with natural resources, and with a brilliant and diverse population overflowing with talent. Wonderful gifts that we can use for good, for our betterment and the betterment of mankind, or we can squander those gifts through greed, slavery to our senses, and failing to be Disciples of Christ.

A little over a year ago I had a conversation with a woman who had been raised Catholic, but had fallen away from her faith. During the conversation I brought up how God was punishing us for our failure to live by his laws. I noted the state of the economy, the ever-worsening disruptions on our society, the increase in wildfires and floods... and at that point she got down right indignant. She said, 'What! How can you believe that God controls the weather?'

I was dumbfounded. Who do you think controls the weather, Greg Fishael, a weatherman on TV? Of course God controls the weather. The very idea that the fact would be up for debate illustrates just how far away from God we have fallen, how deep we are into the desert as a society. Why are we in such a mess as a society today? It is simple, as a society we have turned our back on God and we are suffering the consequences of our actions.

So what does this have to do with the Assumption, Mary, and the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick many of will receive during this Mass? One of the roles Mary holds for us is the path to conversion, the path to healing our relationship with her Son.

Anointing of the Sick, is the sacrament that first and foremost heals and strengthens the soul so we can be closer to God and endure what may come. Reception of the sacrament doesn't guarantee physical healing, although that has happened throughout history and in our own parish. That can be hard to take in some cases, but at the end of the day, at that time

when we all get to stand before God, what is more important? I think the answer should be obvious.

In a few short minutes we are going to go back out into that desert, the society that causes the Woman to groan strengthened by the Word, the Eucharist and for many, Anointing of the Sick. We need to pray for healing in our society, we need to pray for us to turn our faces from the culture of death back to the culture of life, back to God. We need to recognize that our actions have first, second and third order effects and that they all have an effect on our society, the Woman and our soul.

Finally we need to improve our relationship with our Mother, with Mary the Mother of God for it is only through her intercession that we have any chance of healing our land and turning it back to God so we can all recognize who controls the weather.