

Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Homily of Bishop Barres

St. Agnes Cathedral

August 15, 2022

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains: “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.” (974)

In the Mystery of Mary’s Assumption, the fourth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary, Our Lady teaches us to have a burning desire for Eternal Life, a burning desire for Heaven. She teaches us that our true home is in Heaven.

The Mystery of the Visitation in Luke Chapter 1, like the Mystery of the Wedding Feast of Cana in John Chapter 2, reminds us that Our Lady’s help is always present to us in the practical problems of daily family life.

Our Lady is the “Queen of Practical Daily Charity within our Extended Families.” She continually intercedes for us and her families with her Son.

She has a contemplative attention to detail to the heartaches and to the joys of our families. She glorifies the Lord in her *Magnificat* and teaches us to do the same.

Our Lady’s intercession reaches our families and daily concerns but it also has a cosmic and apocalyptic significance and role as expressed in the 12th Chapter of the Book of Revelation.

Our Lady is the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” She is the one who, in and through her Son, defeats the great dragon and is the Queen of Victory over Apocalyptic forces of evil.

Mary is the Queen of Salvation History and the Queen of the End Times and the Second Coming.

In his book *The World’s First Love*, Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen draws on the insights and intuitions of Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864), a foundational and pivotal figure in the history of American literature.

Hawthorne was not Catholic, but looking in from the outside, he appreciated the Church’s Marian devotion and doctrine.

He wrote: “I have always envied the Catholics that sweet, sacred, Virgin Mother who stands between them and the Deity, intercepting somewhat his awful splendor, but permitting his love to stream on the worshiper more intelligibly to human comprehension through the medium of a woman’s tenderness.”¹

Little did Nathaniel Hawthorne know his profound appreciation of Marian devotion from outside the Catholic Church would one day be experienced by his daughter, Servant of God Sr. Rose Hawthorne (1851-1926), from inside the Catholic Church.

Sr. Rose was the foundress of the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne and devoted to Good Samaritan-service of those suffering with cancer.

What a truth this story relates! God’s providential designs are so often expressed and accomplished through the intercession and love of Our Lady.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is involved in the life of every believer, and she is close to each of us. When we pray a daily Rosary, we draw near to her who points always to her Son. In the Rosary, we go to Jesus through Mary.

Mary is the Queen of our progress in prayer, our progress in the interior life.

¹ Venerable Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, *The World’s First Love: Mary, Mother of God* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996) 230. I discovered this quote in the July 2019 edition of the *Magnificat*.

The daily rhythm of the Rosary is essential to the daily rhythm of our lives. When we are faithful to the Rosary, Mary teaches us the power of silence and expands within us the capacity for contemplative concentration in all aspects of our prayer lives. The Rosary is an essential spiritual weapon.

As a powerful prayer for peace, the Rosary helps cultivate interior peace, peace within families, peace in the Church we love, peace in our cities² and peace in the world.

In his 2002 Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, Pope Saint John Paul II described the power of the Rosary in the lives of the saints and in the history of the Church.³

He emphasized the Rosary as both a biblical and contemplative prayer, and by adding the Luminous mysteries, he made this prayer a true “compendium of the Gospel” that leads us deeper into the mystery of Christ.

The Joyful, Sorrowful, Glorious and Luminous mysteries, with the exception of a few, are taken directly from the Gospels, so praying the Rosary deepens our bond with the Lord. By picking up our rosary and thumbing the beads, we meet Him in the midst of our day, and we meet Him with Our Lady.

Mary’s presence in the mysteries models for us a Marian approach to *lectio divina* or meditation on the Scriptures.⁴ The contemplative and peaceful rhythm of the Hail Mary, prayed while meditating on a gospel mystery, helps us enter the mysteries with Mary as our guide.

We go to Our Lady and our Lord together – as well as St. Joseph, a man known for his “industrious silence” -- to intercede for our families and our parish families, and especially the elderly and the sick in our families, and we remember what Mary tells the wine steward and all of us through Salvation History: “Do whatever my Son tells you to do.”

² See Pope Francis’ 2013 Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium*, 71-75. This section is entitled, “Challenges from Urban Cultures.”

³ See the Vatican website.

⁴ See Pope Benedict XVI’s 2010 Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 27-28.