

Here's a text if you only have a minute ...

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown.

First Reading

The Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name. *Gospel*

He has come to the help of [*my name*], his servant, mindful of his mercy.

Gospel

Father in heaven,
in the plan of your wisdom
she who bore the Christ in her womb
was raised body and soul in glory to be with him in heaven.
May we follow her example in reflecting your holiness
and join in her hymn of endless life and praise.

Old Opening Prayer

This week's texts if you'd like to reflect further:
Apocalypse 11: 19,12: 1-6.10; Ps. 44 (45); 1 Cor. 15: 20-26; Luke 1: 39-56



As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the child leapt in her womb ...

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ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Year A, 16th August 2020

'Blessed art thou amongst women,
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.'

The glorious taking up of Mary into heaven, though not mentioned in Scripture, has been celebrated since the sixth century and is now part of recognised Roman Catholic doctrine. The feast of the Assumption is celebrated in mid August in the Catholic church, and some other denominations also keep this day as a special Feast of the Virgin Mary.

The readings for today's celebration are all triumphant in tone.

In the **First Reading**, a woman, in whom we can see either Mary or the Early Church, defeats the evil dragon with the help of God, bringing the Messiah safely to birth.

Verses from **Psalms** 44 (45), originally part of a wedding song for a king, are also applied to Mary in today's liturgy. She takes her place, in triumph, in the palace of the King, her Son.

In the **Second Reading**, Paul tells the Corinthians that Christ, raised from the dead, has put all his enemies under his feet, including death. In today's feast we celebrate the fact that Mary, mother of Jesus, also enjoys the fruits of the Resurrection.

The **Gospel** recounts Mary's visit to Elizabeth, where she voices her triumphant hymn of praise, the Magnificat, as she proclaims: 'The Almighty has done great things for me.'

This week, like Mary, we might also wish to praise the Lord for the great things he has done for us, and for the people around us.

Opening Prayer

Almighty ever-living God,
who assumed the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of your Son,
body and soul into heavenly glory,
grant, we pray,
that, always attentive to the things that are above,
we may merit to be sharers of her glory.

First Reading **Apocalypse 11: 19; 12:1–6, 10**

The sanctuary of God in heaven opened, and the ark of the covenant could be seen inside it. Now a great sign appeared in heaven; a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red dragon which had seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. Its tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and dropped them to the earth, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was having the child, so that he could eat it as soon as it was born from its mother. The woman brought a male child into the world, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had made a place of safety ready. Then I heard a voice from heaven. 'Victory and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ.'

I come to my place of prayer. What mood am I in?
What am I hoping for today?

In the way that works best for me, I try to set aside all the events of my life which come crowding into my consciousness. This time is for you, Lord.

When I am ready, I read the text, perhaps several times over.

I let its striking images form a 'word picture' in my mind.

What feelings come to the fore: perhaps revulsion, anxiety, wonder, reassurance ...?

I let my mind's eye wander across the scene.

Maybe I first focus on the fearsome dragon. Is this how I picture evil?
Who or what in my life seems to have behaved like this?

Then I might look at the woman and child. I ponder.

How do her cries affect me?

I notice that both are rescued and safe with the help of God.

Can I recall times when God made a 'place of safety' ready for me?

Where was it? I speak to the Lord about all this. I listen to him.

When the time comes to end my prayer, I thank the Lord for being with me today, and for all those times he has been with me when I have had to fight my own 'dragon'.

Gospel **Luke 1: 39–56**

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.' And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit exults in God my saviour; because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

After achieving a measure of inner stillness, I read this familiar text. Perhaps I first focus on Mary, a young girl rushing to tell Elizabeth her news. How do I see her? Weak, strong, determined, confident, scared ...?

In time, I turn to Elizabeth and the encounter between the two women. I visualise the place ... I hear their voices ... their mutual joy. What strikes me most?

I may like to sing or hum to myself any well known hymn or song inspired by the Magnificat. I focus on the words.

What 'great things' has the Almighty done for me?

What people or events were his instruments? I ponder, then I give thanks.

I look at the Lord's concern for the weak, the poor and the hungry. In today's world, he has no hands to help but mine. What am I able to do? I tell the Lord how I feel and ask for what I need to be of even greater help to those in need.

As I end my prayer, I may choose to turn to Mary:

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee ...