

Homily on Assumption

The Feast of the Assumption is a day of joy. God has won. Love has won. It has won life. Love has shown that it is stronger than death, that God possesses the true strength and that his strength is goodness and love. Mary was taken up body and soul into Heaven: there is even room in God for the body. We have a Mother in Heaven. Heaven is open, Heaven has a heart. In the Gospel we heard the Magnificat, that great poem inspired by the Holy Spirit that came from Mary's lips, indeed, from Mary's heart. Mary wanted God to be great in the world, great in her life and present among us all. She was not afraid that God might be a "rival" in our life, that with his greatness he might encroach on our freedom, our vital space. She knew that if God is great, we too are great. Our life is not oppressed but raised and expanded: it is precisely then that it becomes great in the splendour of God. To think contrary was the great temptation of the modern age, of the past three or four centuries. More and more people have thought and said: "But this God does not give us our freedom; with all his commandments, he restricts the space in our lives. So God has to disappear; we want to be autonomous and independent. Without this God we ourselves would be gods and do as we pleased". This was also the view of the Prodigal Son, who did not realize that he was "free" precisely because he was in his father's house. He left for distant lands and squandered his estate. In the end, he realized that precisely because he had gone so far away from his father, instead of being free he had become a slave; he understood that only by returning home to his father's house would he be truly free, in the full beauty of life.

Two boys were arguing when the teacher entered the room. The teacher says, "Why are you arguing?" One boy answers, "We found a ten dollar bill and decided to give it to whoever tells the biggest lie." "You should be ashamed of yourselves," said the teacher, "When I was your age I didn't even know what a lie was." The boys gave the ten dollars to the teacher.

This is how it is in our modern epoch. Previously, it was thought and believed that by setting God aside and being autonomous, following only our own ideas and inclinations, we would truly be free to do whatever we liked without anyone being able to give us orders. But when God disappears, men and women do not become greater; indeed, they lose the divine dignity, their faces lose God's splendour. In the end, they turn out to be merely products of a blind evolution and, as such, can be used and abused. This is precisely what the experience of our epoch has confirmed for us.

There is a beautiful story about a fruit seller. He supplied fruits to the Royal court. One day the King had a special guest. He ordered mangoes to be supplied for the dinner. Since the season of Mangoes was over there was none to be picked from anywhere. After a long struggle he managed to get hold of a few. But, they could not be presented to the royal court as they were partially damaged. Fear of punishment had overtaken him. He managed to get an audience to the queen. Falling at her feet and placing the damaged mangoes he begged for mercy. The queen was compassionate. She took the mangoes from him and asked him to go in peace. The queen was at the table to serve the guest. She placed the mangoes in a golden plate and set before the king and the guest. Everyone was well pleased with it and the king rewarded the fruit seller.

Today, the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, assures us that we have a queen to present our cause before God in a way acceptable to him. Only if God is great is humankind also great. With Mary, we must begin to understand that this is so. We must not drift away from God but make God present; we must ensure that he is great in our lives. Thus, we too will become divine; all the splendour of the

divine dignity will then be ours. Let us apply this to our own lives. On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the gift of the Mother, and let us pray to Mary to help us find the right path every day. Amen.