



Assumption of the Virgin Mary

Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6,10 1Cor 15: 20-29 Luke 1: 39-56

Lightning, thunder, an earthquake and a violent hailstorm, this is the overture to a story which is presented as a sign of the coming of the reign of God. To appreciate the imagery you need to read on to the end of Chapter 12.

The Book of Revelation is written in a special style called apocalyptic. We come to it as if we were studying a semi-abstract painting or hearing a dream sequence. There are vivid images but sometimes a lack of logical connection.

The central symbol is a pregnant *queen-of-the-heavens*. She is threatened by a dragon. This beast is set on the destruction of the heavens and particularly the new offspring of the heavens. The new baby boy is taken to the throne of God. All these images point to Jesus as being unique in his heritage. As John says, the Word is of God from eternity.

The *queen-of-the-heavens*, is queen in her maternity but is of earth and so after her child is born she lives in “retreat” in the desert. The role of the disciple is to give birth to the reign of God in His or her life.

A battle is waged between good and evil and the outcome is victory for Good. This is a post resurrection story symbolically marking the end of the reign of evil.

To emphasise the importance of resurrection Paul describes Jesus as “first fruits”. Jesus is the one who leads the way, the first offering of the new age. As the servants of God vanquished evil, in the first story, so it is that Jesus, the suffering Servant, defeats the final enemy of us all, death.

The first reading spoke to us in symbol, the second reading used the language of theology and in the Gospel we have a simple narrative.

We call this story the visitation although it is more accurately a second annunciation. The first story of Mary’s reception of the news of the Messiah was private. Mary made her commitment as servant of God in the privacy of her prayer. Now is the time for the proclamation to others. It reminds us of the threefold proclamation of Jesus birth which rippled out to include the world in the persons of the magi.

There are four points we can make from this feastday in the light of the readings.

With the coming of Jesus a new age dawned for humanity.

All who follow Jesus are committed to the establishment of the reign of God. That Mary, in her uniting herself to God as servant of the kingdom is honoured in a special way.

Christians who are faithful to the ministry to which they are called will “shine like stars for all eternity.

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