

Feast of the Assumption - 15 August

Acknowledgment of Land, Seas, Skies and Waterways

As we reflect on this Feast of the Assumption and how we are all loved, body and soul, by God, we acknowledge the First Nations Peoples who have been loved by the Creator Spirit for time immemorial. We acknowledge the Elders past, present and emerging as we commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation and understanding that dialogue with First Nations Peoples can deepen connection to Country and each other.

Context of The Feast of the Assumption

The Feast of the Assumption of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is celebrated with adoration and dedication in the Catholic Church. The Feast of the “Memory of Mary” is one of the earliest Marian feasts, celebrated from as early as the 300 CE. The Assumption is a Dogma of the Church, which means that although it is not specifically stated that Mary was assumed Body and Soul, the Church believes the Assumption is a true and necessary part of the beliefs around Mary. Although the Assumption had been celebrated and believed for centuries, the dogma was declared by Pope Pius XII in 1950, based on the following main areas:

- The lack of relics of Mary (Many relics of other Saints etc. were found)
- Her empty tomb
- The early tradition of the celebration of the Feast Day
- Symbols of her assumption in Scripture
- Stories from early apostolic Tradition
- Quotes from early Christian letters and sermons.

Celebrations around the world can include Masses, street parades and community feasts with the inclusion of Assumption meals and pageants.

Scripture – Gospel reading from the Mass of the Assumption

[Luke 1:39-45]

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.”

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection by Bec Burns

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As we continue to commit to dialogue within and outside Christian communities, the Feast of the Assumption is a wonderful opportunity to encounter Mary from another perspective in the hope that this knowledge and exploration can further deepen our own understanding of the ways we know and relate to Mary.

The Muslim faith also honours Mary as the mother of Jesus. Islam acknowledges a line of prophets from Adam to Muhammad. According to Muslim belief, the people to whom God proclaimed God’s message, and lived their lives according to that message can be considered prophets. This includes a wide range of figures who appear in the Quran and the Bible, such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus (Tottoli, 2002). Indeed,



Figure 1 The Assumption Created by Previati Gaetano. Fine Art. Britannica ImageQuest, Encyclopædia Britannica, 25 May 2016.

the Quran also tells of the story of Mary receiving the news of the upcoming birth of her son from 'Our Angel, represented as well-proportioned man'. The story differs in several ways from the infant narratives in the Gospels, however the instrumental fact that Mary gave birth to an incredibly special son is a significant bond between the faiths. By reading the story in the Quran and listening deeply to Muslim scholars we are opened up to the fact that according to both Christians and Muslims, Mary was not only important because she gave birth to Jesus, she also embodies grace and faith. Both Christians and Muslims believe that Mary was obedient to God, righteous, moral, upstanding, faithful, chaste, pure, and a positive role model for both faith and action. (Armajani, 2017).

This encounter with Islam also invites us to learn more about God's relationship with humanity, and the importance of the gift of Jesus. For example, Muslim teaching informs us that God's compassion for human beings is so great that he called Jesus into existence to be a significant example of compassion and mercy (Siddiqui, 2012). Mary's role in giving life to Jesus is a remarkable example of love, compassion, and generosity (Stowasser, 1994).

Finally, by entering into interfaith dialogue we can also feel the presence, grace, and power of God. In the Bible when the Mary asks the question of how she could be pregnant, she is told that the power of the Holy Spirit is upon her. In the Quran when Mary asks the same question, she is told because I only need to say 'Be'. In both instances the power and grace of God goodness is expressed simply. This word 'Be', used in the Islamic story instills a sense of peace, a trust that one can hand everything over to God. The importance of understanding this trust and power is particularly important during times of uncertainty.

References referred to above from in: Armajani, Jon (2017) "Interpretations of Jesus and the Virgin Mary in the Quran and the Bible: A Possible Contribution to Muslim-Christian Cooperation?," *The Journal of Social Encounters*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, 63-79. Available at: https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/social_encounters/vol1/iss1/7

Prayer

Blessed Mother Mary, Mother of all, You have been there for us always.
 Thank you for guiding us on life's journey.
 You have been our guide and taught us to trust.
 Keep us in your loving care.
 Help us to know your Son Jesus better and walk in His way.
 Amen.

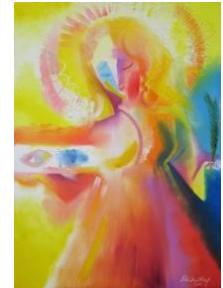


Figure 2 Mary by Stephen B Whatley

Call to Action

- Discuss with your family what they know of the other faith groups and their beliefs; perhaps you could read this article from [America Magazine](#) or these resources from [Ignatian Spirituality](#).
- Talk to your own children about your relationship with Mary (if you have one) and ask what they have learnt about Mary and what characteristics they appreciate or connect with and why.
- Look at various images of Mary (maybe you could invest in some from [Br Mickey McGrath](#)) and discuss which images you and your children connect with.

