

“The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.”

Homily by Most Reverend John T. Folda, Bishop of Fargo

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“The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” With these words, Mary gives praise to God for the blessings he had bestowed upon her, but could she ever have imagined all that that would mean? Just think of the intimacy, the union of hearts that existed between Jesus and his mother Mary. To prepare her for her role as the mother of God’s Son, he preserved her from the stain of original sin at the moment of her conception. And from that moment on, he placed in her heart an unswerving desire to love him, and to always be near to his heart.

Today we celebrate again the Solemnity of the Assumption. And sometimes people ask why we as a Church believe in the Assumption of our Blessed Mother. But the answer is actually very simple. Mary was the perfect disciple of her Son. And at the end of her life on earth, she was assumed into heaven, body and soul, where she continues to dwell at the side of Jesus for eternity. During her life, she was always attentive to the voice of God. She willingly accepted the Son of God as her son, and gave to him her own human nature. She worshiped and revered the body of her Son from the moment that he was conceived in her womb to the moment that she held him in her arms after he was taken down from the cross. And even now, she worships the same Lord, with all the angels and saints in the glory of heaven.

My dear sons, today you are to receive the ministry of acolyte. You will draw near to our Lord in a special way, an intimate way. You will bear him to others, just as Mary bore him and gave him to us. You will carry Jesus in the Eucharist to his people, so that they might share in the holy communion of his body and blood. In fact, that will be your mission in the priesthood as well: to bring Christ to his people. Whether in his word or in his sacraments, Jesus desires to dwell with his people, and he asks you to be his instrument, the one who will help him accomplish his mission.

Through this ministry, the Church invites you to become “Eucharistic men.” In other words, in an even more powerful way, you must draw life from the Eucharist, the life of Jesus that will strengthen you for your own journey. And just as Mary gave constant worship and reverence to Jesus, you must do the same. Never cease to gaze on him with wonder, and with the same love that Mary had for her Son. The Gospel tells us that “she pondered these things in her heart,” and that should be our attitude as well. One can only marvel at the mystery of Christ in the Eucharist, the love that would move God to give himself with such generosity. Enter into his presence as often as you can, just as Mary did. And listen to his voice, his word, as Mary did. Let there be a union of hearts, just as the hearts of Jesus and Mary were intimately united in love.

To be a minister of the Eucharist also requires that you become men of charity. The Eucharist is Christ, who is God incarnate. And as St. John tells us, “God is love.” If we would be servants of Jesus, servants of his sacramental presence, then we must be men of self-giving love, the pastoral charity of Jesus himself. Our liturgical ministry must be in continuity with the

charity of our lives. In this step on the journey towards the priesthood, it becomes more and more important that we look to the needs of our brothers and sisters, even before our own. And once again, Mary is our model. She set out to the hill country of Judah to assist her cousin Elizabeth, an act of charity and self-sacrifice. Mary can always be your guide to charity, because she always leads us to her Son.

The mystery of the Assumption is a great source of hope for all of us. With the assurance of the Church we know that Mary has already attained the glory that we all aspire to and hope for. And through our unity with Christ in the Eucharist, Jesus makes it possible for us to attain that same glory, that same heavenly dwelling. Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day." The Eucharist is a pledge of resurrection, of eternal life in Christ, and Mary reassures us of this promise.

Dear friends, let us always look to Mary as a sure and certain guide to her Son. And may our celebration of the Eucharist bring us ever closer to the glory she enjoys with him in heaven.