

Rev. Derek Fairman

Solemnity of the Assumption

Today the Church celebrates the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. This day we renew our belief that God indeed brought her, body and soul, into Heaven. This day we also renew our devotion to the Mother of God. We take the time to think about the ways in which she offers her help to us and prays for us. We thank her for the prayers that she offers on our behalf.

We heard in the first reading about the Ark of the Covenant. Now, the Ark of the Covenant was the most sacred and precious object in Israel. That was not just because it was lined with gold, but because it was where God's presence rested. It was the inheritance of the children of Israel to remind them of the covenant that God had made with their ancestors and with them. It was the holiest object in all Israel, and so it was the most precious.

We might imagine their anguish whenever they could not find it again after the destruction of the Temple. Not only did they lose the most precious object they had, but they no longer enjoyed God's presence in the same way. They rebuilt the Temple, but it was not the same without the Ark of the Covenant. That is why they looked forward so much to the messiah who would come to restore Israel.

As we celebrate the Assumption, we keep the history of the Ark of the Covenant in mind. Why does the Church offer us these readings about the Ark of the Covenant? Well, the Book of Revelation tells us that the Ark of the Covenant is in Heaven. The Lord replaced the old Ark of the Covenant with something new. The Ark of the Covenant was only a foreshadowing. The old Ark of the Covenant was made of acacia wood and lined with gold. The new Ark of the Covenant is not made by tools. The new Ark of the Covenant is where God's presence rests. In fact, the new Ark of the Covenant is not an object but a person.

We can recognize that the Virgin Mother of God is this new Ark of the Covenant. Upon her the Holy Spirit came to rest, to overshadow her. She was full of grace, from the first moment of her conception. At the Annunciation, the eternal Son of God found a home in her. Even after the birth of the Lord Jesus, her soul was filled with holiness. We can recognize the great dignity that the Lord has bestowed upon her by calling her to be the Mother of His Son. She is precious and holy even beyond the old Ark of the Covenant.