

HAIL, MARY!

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION

CYCLE A

Revelations 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

1 Corinthians 15:20-27

Luke 1:39-56

OPENING PRAYER

(The community joins in singing, "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman".

Leader: The queen takes her place at your right hand in gold of Ophir.

All: The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

Leader: Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear,
forget your people and your father's house.

All: The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

Leader: So shall the king desire your beauty;
for he is your lord.

All: The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

Leader: They are borne in with gladness and joy;
they enter the palace of the king.

All: The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

COMMENTARY

In mid-summer the church presents us with the gift of this feast of Mary. It is a celebration where heaven and earth meet much as Elizabeth and Mary do in this week's gospel. Today is a day when we could have many other selections from the gospel writers concerning the kingdom of heaven. Instead of a *heavenly* gospel, we are presented with the simple and extraordinary meeting of two women, separated by age and distance, who come together to celebrate the miracle of God's gracious love for them and their unborn children. The church reminds us, in effect, that Mary's assumption into heaven was the end of a journey spent welcoming opportunities to share her life with those around her and praising God's love for the world.

This meeting of Mary and Elizabeth can serve as a model for our relationships with all of those who come into the circle of our lives. As we hurry through our days, there are many times when we are not aware of those whom we meet. Often, days become so much of a blur that when we lie down to sleep we have very little recollection of how our day was spent. The feast of the Assumption places before us the deliberately lived life of Mary. She does not panic and run from girl friend to girl friend to find out what to think and how to react to the news that she is pregnant by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. She set out in haste all right, to a cousin in need. She is a woman on mission. The greeting Mary utters to Elizabeth provides us with a song of praise for all of life's journeys through our own hills and mountains.

We may ponder as to why this kinswoman, older and at a distance, was chosen as the confidante and comforter of this young woman who may have been confused and unnerved by her recent angelic visitor. We may wonder at the young Mary setting off to visit her pregnant cousin when her own life seemed in such upheaval. Let us place ourselves within the context of this reality and ponder the gracious hearts of both of these daughters of Israel.

Both appear to reach out to the other with calm and concern. In the act of greeting one another, they seem to lose their own anxiety and appre-

hension. There is no need to pour out their personal fear or tell their story at the moment of greeting. Rather, Mary sings forth a hymn of praise to the gracious and timeless love of the God of all ages after Elizabeth has greeted her young cousin with the words we continue to cry out whenever we pause to salute the mother of Jesus.

We have in this meeting of two women a model for our friendships but, more than that, a model for our relationships with all. Self-forgetfulness, humility and graciousness mark this meeting. God's love filled Mary's heart and life and her whole being. So filled with God's love is she that her whole being is preserved in love. Let us rejoice and open our hearts and live in this same love.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

1. How do you greet and welcome those who come into your life day by day?
2. How do anxieties in your life affect your ability to reach out to others?
3. When is the last time that you went the *extra mile* for someone in distress?
4. Recall a time when you were welcomed and put at ease by the kindness of another.
5. For what in your life these days do you give praise to God?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

1. Set aside time this week to visit someone who is ill or housebound. Make his/her comfort your only concern.
2. Set aside fifteen minutes this week to reflect on the presence of Mary in your life. Unite your heart to her openness to God's love.

3. Contact those in your parish who prepare parents for the baptism of their children. Offer to help in some way.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader calls for a few minutes of silence. Then members pray in two alternating groups.)

- I. My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
- II. From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for
me, and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear
him in every generation.
- I. He has shown the strength of his arm
and has scattered the proud in their conceit.
- II. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.
- I. He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
- II. He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Luke 1:46-55

*(The session concludes with the praying of the **Hail Mary** and the exchange of a sign of peace.)*