



OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

Solemnity of the Assumption Vigil Mass

*Homily*

[*1Chronicles 15:3-4, 15-16; 16:1-2; Psalm 132; 1Corinthians 15: 54-57; Luke 11:27-28*]

Recently the City of Edmonton announced changes to the speed limit for vehicles traveling along its streets. To the chagrin of many, that limit has been reduced from fifty km/hr to forty. It now feels as if we are moving at a snail's pace, so the City is quick to explain that the lower speed limit will contribute greatly to assuring that drivers and passengers arrive safely at their destination.

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds us all of life's ultimate destination. The sacred biblical texts speak of the required limitations on our movement to assure safe arrival.

Our destination, we know, is eternal life. As St. Paul points out in the second reading, this has been made possible for us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Having fashioned us for Himself, God sent His Son to assume and redeem our human nature so that we might live with Him forever in an eternal participation in His own Triune life. While in Jesus this destination of eternal life is effectively promised, in Mary, his mother, we see the promise fulfilled. The glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, body and soul, into heaven, was a unique privilege granted to her. At the same time, it shines forth as a gift to the entire Church, because we see in this wondrous mystery the destiny that awaits us all.

Yet, how do we "arrive" there in safety? What limits need to be placed on our movements to slow us down and keep us moving safely and surely along the path that leads to eternal life? The answer to those questions is given by Jesus in the passage we heard this evening from St. Luke.

When our Lord hears people spontaneously and rightly call Mary blessed for having borne and nurtured him, he replies, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!" The Word of God establishes the limits within which we live and move. Obedience to those limits is what keeps us safe as we move along life's pilgrimage.

Now, I believe it is fair to say that we do not like limit. It chafes against us. Consider, for example, our many frustrations with pandemic restrictions. Think, too, of our response to the lower speed limit. We are told that it is now 40 km/hr, "unless otherwise posted". So, we look in hope for those signs telling us we can go faster. Similarly has humanity sought throughout its history to push against the limits imposed by God's Word. In countless ways we have believed the serpent's ancient lie, which tricked Adam and Eve – and continues to dupe the world - into thinking that God's Word is a threat to human freedom, rather than the condition for its proper exercise.

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Living within the parameters established by the Word of God is no menace to human liberty. Rather, it is the source of true blessedness, of real happiness, as Jesus himself promises. Here again we turn to the Blessed Mother as our exemplar. Mary is not only the sole person ever to be assumed body and soul into heaven. She is also the perfect disciple, who from her first response to the angel Gabriel expressed her readiness to be shaped entirely by the Word God spoke to her: “Be it done unto me, according to thy Word.” Her readiness to accept the limitations placed upon her life by God’s command was born of a faith that was itself without limit.

Tonight, let us turn in prayer to the Blessed Mother and ask that, by her intercession, we, too, will live peacefully and trustingly within the limits established by divine injunction. By her intercession, may we not speed headlong into self-reliance but slow down and travel with trust in God’s providence. With the help of her prayers, may we hit the brakes when despair is around the corner and instead accelerate our hope in the love of God. May true charity so guide our lives, as it did hers, that the only limits we seek to exceed are those of self-reference.

By the Assumption of his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Jesus has placed before the world the wondrous and glorious destiny planned from all eternity by God for all God’s beloved children. The Heavenly Father has given us His Son as the Way that leads to eternal life. That we might follow that Way in safety, God has given us the Blessed Mother to teach us by her example to trust the limits God has set down by His Word and live within them. By the grace of this Eucharist and the prayers of Mary, may we, like she, accept those limits joyfully as God’s precious gift.

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Skaro Pilgrimage  
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