

Feast Days this Week:

Monday: St Stephen of Hungary

Thursday: St John Eudes

Friday: St Bernard

Saturday: St Pius X

Cycle of Prayer:

We pray for: a deeper understanding between Christians and Jews; for human life; for those who suffer persecution, oppression and denial of human rights; for Europe, St Bridget, and St Teresa Benedicta.

10th Anniversary of the Syrian conflict – how your donations have helped the Syrian people:

Thanks to your donations, CAFOD has been helping people in Syria since the crisis began 10 years ago. Over 12 million people have left their homes, 5.6 million are refugees in neighbouring countries and within Syria, 13 million people need help. At the beginning, our focus was on delivering food and blankets through our local church partners. Then we started providing education, health and legal services, and helping people earn a living. Our latest projects are supporting children, lonely elderly people, helping women learn to read, and helping people restart their small businesses. We've always planned for the long term, standing alongside people who lost everything. None of this work would have been possible without your support of CAFOD.

PARISHIONERS WHO ARE UNWELL If you would like the parish to pray for someone who is currently unwell, please email news@stfrancisgoosnargh.org.uk or ring Father Sony on 01772 865229. It will be then be included in the newsletter. We have an area in church where you can write a prayer intention on a card and hang it up if you prefer it not to go on the parish newsletter.

CHURCH DONATIONS With many people still unable to attend church we still need to maintain an income for maintenance. There are several ways you can still make your contributions including by cheque or direct debit. For details please go to the church website or contact Tom Smyth on 017722 865689.

Attendance and Collection: Sunday 1 August – attendance: 36 | collection: £233.00



St Francis Hill Chapel Parish Newsletter

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**In case of emergency (and unable to contact Father Sony) please ring
Father Dutton on 01772 782641 or Canon Doyle on 01772 782244**

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

15 August 2021 (Readings: Year B)

Parish Mission Statement

Our Parish, guided by the example of our patron St Francis of Assisi, seeks to be a welcoming Catholic Community, by living, sharing and growing in faith. We strive to deepen our own relationship with Christ and meet the needs of others.

Mass today is for the people of the parish.

Please pray for all those whose anniversaries occur about this time, especially John Morland Cowell, Winifred Sarah Moore, Elizabeth Louise Jones and Margaret Agnes Parker. *May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.*

Daily Mass: live at 9.30am from St Clare's in Preston can be accessed on their YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/user/StClaresChurch/>

Sunday Obligation: Statement from the Catholic Bishops of England on 19 July: We are mindful of the certain fact that the Covid-19 virus is still circulating in society. It is our continuing judgement that it is not possible at the present time

for all of the faithful to attend Mass on a Sunday. **For more reading visit**
<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/sunday-it-is-our-day/>

SAFETY RULES FOR MASS

Stewards will be on duty to ensure that safety procedures are followed. Full details are on our website. Please do read them.

Face masks will need to be worn.

Please follow these guidelines once entering church:

* **Sanitise hands** on entry.

* A hymn book and mass book will be given to you on entry. Singing is now permitted.

* Please do **keep your distance** – use the high visibility tape on floor as a guide.

* Place your collection on the collection plate **as you enter**.

* Please take a newsletter on entry and **take it away when you leave**.

* At Holy Communion:

Please wear a mask as you go up the aisle to communion and remove their mask before they receive the sacrament.

People from upstairs will go first down the right-hand side and return down the opposite aisle to maintain social distancing.

People on the right-hand side will then receive Holy Communion, followed by people on the left-hand side – guided by the stewards.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

On 15 August we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, commemorating the death of Our Lady and her bodily assumption into Heaven. Because it signifies the Blessed Virgin's passing into eternal life, it is one of the most important Marian feasts as well as being a Holy Day of Obligation. However, it was only seventy-one years ago that Pope Pius XII made an infallible statement defining the dogma of the Assumption, he wrote:

“By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

The decree was seen as formalising the long-held Christian teaching that Our Lady was assumed body and soul into heaven. Indeed, the Feast of the Assumption is one of the oldest holy days in the Church, with accounts of celebrations going back to the sixth century. Christians in the East, both Catholic and Orthodox, refer to it as the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. The earliest printed reference to the belief that Mary's body was assumed into Heaven dates from the fourth century, in a document entitled ‘The Falling Asleep of the Holy Mother of God’. The document is written in the voice of St John the Apostle, to whom Christ on the Cross had entrusted the care of His mother, and it recounts the death, laying in the tomb, and assumption of the Blessed Virgin. Tradition variously places Mary's death at Jerusalem or at Ephesus, where John was living.

Many Christian countries, particularly around the southern Mediterranean, celebrate the Feast Day in great style with elaborate festivals or ‘Festas’. Perhaps the most elaborate and impressive Festas take place on the tiny island of Malta, where practically all the towns and villages hold Festas on 15 August. By far the largest celebration in honour of The Assumption takes place in Mosta, where the Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady attracts huge crowds. In the Second World War the church was almost destroyed when, during an air raid, a 200kg bomb fell through the dome without exploding. All the 300 people attending morning mass were left unharmed. Consequently, the Maltese see this as somewhat of a miracle and celebrate Our Lady's Feast Day in great style. The massive dome of the Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption, the third largest dome in the world, is covered in bright red material and festooned with lights for the feast. The front of the church is also bedecked with lights of various colours, and flags and banners are flown in honour of Our Blessed Lady. Holy Mass is celebrated in the early evening and is followed by the statue of Our Lady being carried in procession around the Rotunda accompanied by bands, the clergy, local dignitaries and huge crowds of locals and visitors. The day ends with a spectacular firework display and a grand outdoor celebration of feasting and dancing.

Mike Bryan

First reading

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

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman adorned with the sun

The sanctuary of God in heaven opened and the ark of the covenant could be seen inside it.

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman, adorned with the sun, standing on the moon, and with the twelve stars on her head for a crown. She was pregnant, and in labour, crying aloud in the pangs of childbirth. Then a second sign appeared in the sky, a huge red dragon which had seven heads and ten horns, and each of the seven heads crowned with a coronet. Its tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and dropped them to the earth, and the dragon stopped in front of the woman as she was having the child, so that he could eat it as soon as it was born from its mother. The woman brought a male child into the world, the son who was to rule all the nations with an iron sceptre, and the child was taken straight up to God and to his throne, while the woman escaped into the desert, where God had made a place of safety ready.

Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, 'Victory and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ.'

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 44(45):10-12,16

On your right stands the queen, in garments of gold.

The daughters of kings are among your loved ones.

On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Listen, O daughter, give ear to my words:

forget your own people and your father's house.

On your right stands the queen, in garments of gold.

So will the king desire your beauty:

He is your lord, pay homage to him.

They are escorted amid gladness and joy;

they pass within the palace of the king.

On your right stands the queen, in garments of gold.

Second reading

1 Corinthians 15:20-26

Christ will be brought to life as the first-fruits and then those who belong to him

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order: Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to him. After that will come the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power. For he must be king until he has put all his enemies under his feet and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death, for everything is to be put under his feet.

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!

Mary has been taken up to heaven;
all the choirs of angels are rejoicing.

Alleluia!

Gospel

Luke 1:39-56

The Almighty has done great things for me

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

And Mary said:

'My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord

and my spirit exults in God my saviour;

because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.

Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed,

for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is his name,
and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him.
He has shown the power of his arm,
he has routed the proud of heart.
He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away.
He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy
– according to the promise he made to our ancestors –
of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.’
Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home.

HOMILY

If Fr Val Farrell, now resident at Nazareth House, were to receive royalties for all the occasions on which I have used a phrase which he passed on to me some forty years ago, he would be a rich man. The phrase, describing Our Lady, is “the eschatological ikon of the Church”.
Mary is the eschatological ikon of the Church as I have by now informed you probably more often than you have had hot dinners. This means, as you may now be tired of hearing, that Mary IS what the Church is called to be: she is what you and I are called to be, what we shall be in eternity, and what the Church, at her best, already is, at least in embryo.
Let us consider how this works. The most ancient title of Our Lady, apart from those given to her in the scriptures, is THEOTOKOS, God Bearer, Mother of God. This title was defined by the Council of Ephesus in the year 431. How, you may ask, can it apply to us?
We, as the Church, and as individuals, are called to be mothers of God today, bringing God, in the person of Jesus Christ, into today’s world, making Him present to the world by our words and actions. Mary is Mother of God not only physically, but especially spiritually, enabling Him to be a presence in and for the world: physically, we cannot do the same, but spiritually we can and must.
Many more examples can be drawn from today’s Gospel, of the Visitation. Firstly, Mary is seen as the woman of compassion, setting out to care for her elderly cousin in her pregnancy. Secondly, she is the woman who brings Christ to others, fulfilling her role as Mother of God spiritually, as He makes His presence known to Elizabeth and to her unborn son. Thirdly, she is the woman filled with the Spirit, as she enables others to be filled with the Spirit,

as are John who leaps in the womb, and Elizabeth who prophesies. Are not all of these qualities to be looked for in the Church?
Mary goes on to reveal herself as the woman of prayer and praise, as she declaims the Magnificat, a prayer which the Church utters daily at Evening Prayer, or Vespers, and the Anglican Communion at Evensong. In that prayer, she exults in the saving works of God, she rejoices in her own lowliness, and she recognises both the holiness of God and the marvels which He has worked for and in her.
She then goes on to praise the compassion of God, and to encourage us to imitate Him in His preference for the poor and the downtrodden, in words which will find an echo in her Son’s Beatitudes. It is small wonder that the Magnificat has become a rallying cry among those working for justice in Latin America.
Perhaps most significant for today’s feast are Elizabeth’s words “Blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled”. Mary is the woman of faith, as the Church must be a people of faith, and we must be men and women of faith. This faith is the source of Mary’s blessedness, which she herself asserts will be proclaimed throughout the generations.
The Church’s definition of the Assumption of Mary as a doctrine, is an assertion of the Church’s faith in God’s promise to the Church. St Paul reminds the Christians of Corinth that “all people will be brought to life in Christ, but all of them in their proper order”. As the Preface of today’s Mass points out, the Assumption of Our Lady makes her once again the eschatological ikon of the Church, because she is “the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its fulfilment”.
Mary is received body and soul into heaven. She is the Ark of the Covenant as the dwelling place of God: she is the woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon and crowned with the stars; but so is the Church. She has been taken to her fulfilment as the first of the redeemed: we are to follow. In the meantime, we must take to heart the words of the Magnificat, and “all generations will call (her) blessed”.