

MAGNIFICAT

*The Almighty has done great things for me; holy is His name.* I'm happy to preach on this summer weekend when the universal Church celebrates the feastday of Mary's Assumption. We love Mary because, as the Mother of Jesus, she always brings us to Him; moreover, from the Cross Jesus gave us Mary to be our own loving Mother. Today, the Assumption, we profess that at the end of her natural life Mary was taken to heaven body as well as soul. According to St. Gregory of Tours the Apostles visited her tomb on the third day and found it empty. She was not there. She had risen, which is why no church on earth has ever claimed to possess her body. Today's feast then gives us joy. It makes us look to heaven, to the resurrection and the new creation, to Jesus and to that TGLHHAF for which we long. This is why with Mary we sing: *My soul glorifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.*

Now earlier this summer Pope Francis issued an Encyclical Letter called *Laudato Si* on the care of nature, the earth, the environment. A papal encyclical has a high level of teaching authority and *Laudato Si*, which builds on the teaching of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI, is one of the most challenging I've ever read. In it the Holy Father states forcibly that environmental concern is intrinsic to Christian morality. We must care for creature. The devastation of the earth is linked to the degradation of human society caused by an unregulated consumer-culture, that severs ethics from technology and pursues affluence at any price. We need to act now, he says, before it's too late. We need to change our life-styles. We need to respect nature, to adopt a sound, holistic ecology and to live more simply without wastefulness. *Laudato Si* is bold and incisive. It's long, but not difficult. I urge you to read it.

*Laudato Si* is linked closely with today's feast. For Mary's Assumption in the flesh reminds us of the immense dignity of the human body, of the created world, of the material universe we inhabit. As St. Elizabeth said to her in the Gospel: *Of all women you are the most blessed and blessed is the fruit of your womb.* In taking flesh from Mary by the power of the Spirit, God the Son shows us the dignity of corpo-reality, of God's gift of the body and all that goes with it: health-care, food and drink, sport and exercise, nature and respect for the environment. Of course, human being is a deep mystery. We are at once spiritual AND physical. We have a soul *aswellas* a body, and against one-sided, reductionist views of human life and the human person, both body and soul are critical to our well-being. For this mystery we thank God every Christmas in the Incarnation but today the Assumption we rejoice to see Christ's victory applied to Mary, the Church's leading member.

*From this day forward* Mary said *all generations will call me blessed.* Tonight, as we reflect on the Luminous Mysteries of our salvation in Christ, let's ask Mary to join her prayers with ours. Let us pray for a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit that freed from the drug of excessive consumption we may find a way to live more simply, respectful of creation. Let's pray too that the dignity of the human person from conception to natural death, which in our society today is often under attack, may be everywhere upheld. And let us pray for ourselves, that through the intercession of the She who was assumed body and soul into heaven, the Lord will grant us the grace to be holy, to persevere in our faith, and one day to pass-over in Him to the happiness of heaven.