

**Homily for August 15, 2004  
Feast of the Assumption**

**By Father Charles Bowes**

**Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6, 10  
1 Corinthians 15:20-27  
Luke 1:39-56**

## *The Assumption of Mary into heaven proclaims loud and clear that no life is ever lost or wasted.*

“He looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant” – words Saint Luke puts on the lips of Mary in chapter one of his Gospel.

Consider the many folks among us who think of themselves as lowly or insignificant. There don't seem to be any real boundaries to this feeling. The young can feel like they don't matter. The elderly often don't feel like they count. A man who is losing his capacity for work told me recently that he's beginning to feel “discarded.” Often, people who are unemployed feel this way, as do those who are chronically ill, or those who suffer with mental illnesses, or those who have been abused. There doesn't seem to be any limit to the number of ways a person can reach the point of feeling insignificant. These texts preach to this state of mind by saying, “Look! God chose the insignificant ones. God chose the ones who the world thought were nothing. In fact, God even became one of the despised ones!”

Mary wasn't Pharaoh's daughter; she wasn't a woman blessed with great material comfort or worldly wisdom. She was a teenager, betrothed but unmarried – and suddenly pregnant. You know the story: Joseph didn't want to hurt her, but he found it hard to understand. Joseph came to believe the vision he had in a dream that his family was to be God's earthly family.

How much more proof do we need of God's overwhelming love for us?

God came into the humblest home, where lived the humblest hearts, hearts full of love and questioning, but the faith-filled questioning that leads to acceptance, and ultimately to joy.

When Mary, young and unwed and pregnant, visits her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy. At this point (according to Scripture, Mary's pregnancy wasn't very far advanced), Mary probably hadn't even yet felt the first stirrings in her own womb – all she had to go on was the promise.

Her song of triumph and wonder is a model for us all of what discipleship means. She opens herself in an all-trusting “yes” to God's will. She proclaims an understanding of the enormity of her task, but also the humility of being the one chosen. She reflects the promise she has heard all her life, never dreaming that she herself would be the instrument of its fulfillment.

But there is another message here within the words – “He looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.” This Gospel also speaks to the non-poor, non-oppressed, non-sick, non-disenfranchised of this world. The “haves” are moved toward “an attitude of solidarity with their victims.” So, these texts reach out not only to

the marginalized of the world but also to those of us who sit in seats of power, exhorting all to remember that we are brothers and sisters. Status can no longer be a dividing line for the believer, for it is not for God. Thus, we can be free of the need either to hold on to our power or to seek it. This can be very good news to the powerful, for even the powerful know that their status in the world is fragile.

So it is that in the faith and hope of this unwed pregnant teenager, we have the model for our own witness. There is no one unworthy – there is no one unimportant or insignificant in God's plan. We all have our place in the Lord Jesus' passage through death to life, learning to surrender and say "yes" to God's will for us, so that Mary's song of joy may be our song too.

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