

May I speak in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The feast we celebrate today, the Assumption of Mary, is a feast that has a long tradition in Anglican devotion. From the earliest days of distinctively Anglican thought, we find witness to the Assumption. The 17th century bishop and hymn writer, Thomas Ken, reflected the widespread belief that at the end of her life God granted Mary her share in the Resurrection:

*Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced,
near to his throne her Son his Mother placed;
and here below, now she's of heaven possest,
all generations are to call her blest.*

This Anglican belief reflects an earlier tradition that Mary has a special status amongst the saints. From early on there are no relics of Mary's remains venerated, unlike the bodies of Peter our Patron, or St Paul.

This reflects the identifies Mary with the woman crowned with stars in the book of Revelation, she already enjoys her place in the Resurrection, and points forward not only to her Son but to the place in the Resurrection that one day each of us with her will share.

There is a growing devotion to Mary across the Church of England. This devotion finds its expression not in the medieval images of Mary as virgin most pure, or Mary meek and mild, but the Mary we find in the Magnificat. The Mary who points to God's action in scattering the proud, bringing down the powerful, lifting the lowly, filling the hungry, sending the rich away empty.

There is a popular graphic that shows Mary making the black power salute surrounded by the rallying cries: cast down the mighty; send the rich away; lift the lowly; feed the hungry. Not an image of Mary in the service of an ecclesiastical elite, but our Lady intervening on the side of the powerless and marginalised.

The radical potential of Mary has not been overlooked by those in power. At various times in history the Magnificat has been banned for fomenting revolution. It was banned by the junta in Argentina from being printed for fear it might provoke rebellion against those in power.

Today, we recognise that in the life and assumption of Mary God intervenes powerfully in the world. Through Mary God becomes one of us and begins the story of our salvation. Mary's song reminds us that this powerful intervention comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable - as an artist once described the purpose of all art - or in the words of Scripture God's birth in Christ through Mary is destined to 'cause the falling and rising of many'.

Mary's life reminds us of God's action in the world. God raises those that the world puts down, and God humbles those exalt themselves above their station.

One of the divides between Eastern and Western Christianity, is whether Mary was assumed after or at the point of dying. This is probably rather academic. As I've been reflecting on the

Assumption this year, I wondered what was going through Mary's mind as she approached the moment of dying.

She had outlived her husband.

She had experienced the awful pain of outliving her Son.

She had the overwhelming joy of the knowledge of the Resurrection.

She had found her Son teaching in the temple asking questions.

She had been present at the first miracle at Cana.

She shared in the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost.

She now approached the moment of her own death, confident in the Resurrection, but probably not knowing that she would be enjoying her place in the Resurrection sooner than ourselves.

What will go through our minds, when we like Mary, approach our final breaths?

Will we like Mary have lived our lives pointing to her Son?

Will we have sided with the comfortable or the discomforted?

Will our souls skip with the joy of the Resurrection as our spirit rejoices in God our saviour?

Will we have played our part in casting down the mighty, lifting the lowly, feeding the hungry?

Will we be amongst the rich who go empty away or will we have been filled at this table as we meet in bread and wine the one whom Mary met when 'heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced, as near to his throne her Son his Mother placed'?

When we come to the day of Resurrection, that same joy awaits us all.

Amen.