

Assumption Mass 2023

Sts. Peter and Paul Cathedral Basilica, Phila., PA

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A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

Today we celebrate the glorious Assumption of Our Lady into heaven. She who was immaculately conceived, who remained ever sinless, does not suffer the ravages of death which are the result of Original Sin, but is taken body and soul into heaven by the power and love of her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Alleluia verse proclaims, “Mary has been assumed into heaven: the angelic host rejoices. Alleluia!”

Our Lady’s Assumption into heaven is the beginning of her heavenly intercession for us and her constant assistance. She watches over the Church – she watches over you and me – until all is brought to completion in Christ. Throughout the ages Our Lady has sent us heavenly messages. So many shrines exist because of her miraculous help. We think of her shrine in Poland – Our Lady of Czestochowa. We cherish the gift given to us by Our Lady of Mt Carmel – the Holy Scapular. We remember her apparition in Mexico and the thousands of conversions that took place because of Our Lady of Guadalupe. We rejoice in her gift of the Holy Rosary given to Saint Dominic and to us.

In the modern era she has appeared at La Salette, in Paris to Saint Catherine Laboure, in Lourdes to Saint Bernadette, and at Fatima.

I would like to take a few moments to reflect upon her appearances at La Salette and Fatima.

La Salette is a stunning place in the French Alps which was the scene of an apparition of Our Lady to two very simple cattle herders, Melanie Mathieu, aged 14, and Maximin Giraud, aged 11. It took place on Saturday afternoon September 19, 1846.

While they were keeping watch of the cattle, the children saw a large circle of brilliant light, vibrant and outshining the sun. The light was intensified and dazzling. They were stricken with fear. She said to them, “Come to me my children, do not be afraid. I am here to tell you something of the greatest importance.” She continued,

If my people will not obey, I shall be compelled to loose my Son’s arm. It is so heavy, so pressing, that I can no longer restrain it. How long have I suffered for you! ...I entreat Him without ceasing.

*I beg you to:
Keep Holy the Sabbath and always attend Mass.
Cease blaspheming God by your horrible swearing.
Pray every day.*

Our Lady's message at La Salette was a call to obedience, reverence, prayer, repentance and placing God at the center of our lives. Her message was an indictment of man's disobedience to God, of man's forgetfulness of God. It shed a clear light on society's drift away from faith and decent living, to worldliness and a disdain for all that is sacred.

And this was 1846.

Seventy One years later, on May 13, 1917, Our Lady appeared at Fatima. The world was in the midst of the horrors of World War I. The evil of communism was about to be unleashed. Millions of people were about to die horrific deaths.

We all know the story of Francisco, Jacinta and Lucia. While tending sheep Our Lady appeared to them in the Cova da Iria. She gave them very strong warnings about what would happen if men did not repent. Of the many messages they received I would like to summarize just a few:

Offer yourselves to God in order to accept all the sufferings He wishes to send you in reparation for sin and the conversion of sinners.

My children always say the Rosary.

She then revealed to them a vision of Hell – The children looked but the earth was no longer there. They were gazing into a veritable ocean of fire. Even the earth seemed to vanish. They saw huge numbers of devils and lost souls in a vast and fiery ocean. The devils resembled grotesque and hideous animals. They filled the air with despairing shrieks. The lost souls were tumbling about in the flames and screaming with terror. She told them, 'You have seen a vision of Hell where the souls of sinners go'

Her message continued, 'To save sinners God wishes to establish in the world the devotion to my Immaculate Heart. I ask that Russia be consecrated to my Immaculate Heart. I ask you to make communions of reparation on each first Saturday.'

She ended by saying, 'In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph.'

On October 13, 1917 the Miracle of the sun took place. A year later one of the worst flu epidemics in the history of the world began to spread. Vladimir Lenin started a violent communist revolution in Russia. By the 1930's Adolph Hitler would enter the scene and World War II exploded. Mao se Tung began the deadly Communist revolution in China. The nuclear bomb was invented, the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam followed. Terrorism and instability became a constant part of society. Atheism, apostasy, sacrilege, heresy, and communism have continued to spread. And the Church, which is horribly weakened, faces challenges from within and without.

After all of this, the world continues to tumble far away from God and does not heed Our Lady's message.

I conclude where the Mass began,

Signum magnum apparuit in caelo: mulier amicta sole, et
luna sub pedibus ejus, et in capite ejus corona stellarum
duodecim.

A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with
the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown
of twelve stars.

This sign, described in Chapter 12 of the Book of Apocalypse, is the beginning of the final confrontation between God and Satan. Three figures will be involved:

The Woman with her offspring
The Dragon – Satan
And St. Michael the Archangel.

The mysterious figure of the woman has been interpreted ever since the time of the Fathers of the Church as referring to the ancient people of Israel, the Catholic Church and the Blessed Virgin Mary. The text supports all of these interpretations. Yet, the Sacred Liturgy has clearly connected the Assumption of Our Lady, the Woman clothed with the sun, and the end battle with the Dragon – Satan and his human ambassador the Anti-Christ.

From the moment of her glorious Assumption, the Blessed Virgin Mary has watched over us, Her Son's mystical Body. She has miraculously healed people throughout the ages. She has appeared many times to her children and in the last 170 years she has given very stern warnings for the world to repent.

The war of rebellion against God certainly seems to have intensified in unimaginable ways. The story continues in Apocalypse 12; 13-17,

“And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman, who brought forth the man child: And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time,..... And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water as it were a river; that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was angry against the woman: and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and bear testimony to Jesus Christ.”

Wage war on the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments and bear testimony to Jesus Christ!

We, who offer sacrifice in this Cathedral Basilica on this feast of Our Lady's victory are on the front lines of this raging war. We should not be surprised, however, or give in to fear, or be filled with dread, or strike out in an un-Christ like way.

No, we must prove even more that we are faithful children of the Lord who will employ every spiritual weapon at our disposal.

- We will obey the commandments more fervently.
- We will bear testimony to Our Lord, especially in public.
- We will never cease to hand down to our children the great treasures of Tradition we have received.
- We will attend Mass every Sunday and pray at all times, especially the Holy Rosary.
- We will constantly repent, go to confession and grow in holiness.
- We will rejoice in the Truth and never fear proclaiming it from the housetops.
- And we will fight fearlessly against Satan and his vicious lies and those who propagate those lies.

The Lady, clothed with the brilliance of the sun, with the moon under her feet, and the diadem of 12 stars around her head, is the Lady Assumed into heaven who loves us dearly. She never ceases to help and protect us.

Remember her words at Fatima - **MY IMMACULATE HEART WILL TRIUMPH!**