**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer, Aug. 15, 2021**

**The Feast of the Assumption of Mary**

**I**f we follow the questions, the questions will become our answers.

Go where you would not expect to go. Just stumble along and

out of that will come light for the next step.

*(Adapted from Sr. Joan Chittister)*

**HELLOs** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Suzie and Betty)**

**WELCOME (Suzie)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Betty and I had the pleasure of preparing for this Sunday.
* Thanks to Reggie Ott and Linda Donaldson for our music.
* Thanks to Sister France White, whose art we will gratefully share with you.
* Thanks to the people who will are making this prayer happen: Judy Sholes, Pat and Greg Campbell, Jim De Quattro, Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, Ann Masters, Richard McGinnis, Judith Galleazzi, Sister Jo’Ann De Quattro, and Norbert Bufka.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Betty)**

To be with God and each other, we need to first be with ourselves. Let your breath slow and deepen and carry ease into your body and your mind. We pray:

May I quiet my words and listen….

May I calm my thoughts and be….

May I soften my heart and open….

May I still my soul and receive….

(Pause)

At the Annunciation, Mary spoke in the name of humanity, and gave her yes to God's desire to dwell among us. Let us begin celebrating the feast of the Assumption by singing “I say yes, my Lord” in a bi-lingual song about social justice and commitment to God that was written by Donna Peña and arranged by Marty Haugen. Reggie Ott will lead us.

**OPENING SONG – “I say yes, my Lord” by Donna Peña (1989) (Reggie Ott)**

Verse 1:

To the God who cannot die, I say "Yes," my Lord.
To the one who hears me cry, I say "Yes," my Lord.
To the God of the oppressed, I say "Yes," my Lord.
To the God of all justice, I say "Yes," my Lord.

Refrain: I say "Yes," my Lord,

in all the good times, through all the bad times.
I say "Yes," my Lord,
to every word you speak.

Verse 3:

For the dream I have today, I say "Yes," my Lord.
To be a healer of all pain, I say "Yes," my Lord.
To come to love my enemies, I say "Yes," my Lord.
For your peace in all the world, I say "Yes," my Lord.

Refrain: Digo Si, Señor,

en tiempos malos y en tiempos buenos.
Digo Si Señor

a todo lo que hablas.

Verse 4.

Like that of Job, unceasingly, I say "Yes," my Lord.
Like that of Maria, wholeheartedly, I say "Yes," my Lord.
Like that of David in a song, I say "Yes," my Lord.
Like Israel for you I long, I say "Yes," my Lord.

Refrain: I say "Yes," my Lord,

in all the good times, through all the bad times.
I say "Yes," my Lord,
to every word you speak.

**GREETING / CALL TO WORSHIP (Judy Sholes)**

Beloved Community, rejoice in God’s welcome!Alleluia, alleluia!

**All:** Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

**GATHERING PRAYER (Judy Sholes)**

O gracious mystery that we name God,

we thank you for being among us.

We come together

trusting that your Spirit will be at work in us.

Help us to let go… and to let come… as Mary did.

Help us to sense the right questions, and to live them, as Mary did.

Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Today let’s explore together two big, expansive questions: what does it mean to be lifted up into God - to let go? And how does that fit with our longtime prayer to “live the questions now” - to let come? Our companions today will be Mary and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, called LCWR. By the way, over a thousand sisters were part of their annual assembly last week. I will end with a quote from Sister Joan Chittister that they read in preparation.

We start with a bit of history about the Assumption. In the late 4th century, Epiphanius of Salamis searched for reports of what happened to Mary. He identified three beliefs that she died a normal and peaceful death; that she died a martyr; and that she did not die.

Over the next 100 years the idea that that Mary had been taken bodily into heaven – the assumption grew in popularity. By the middle ages, this belief was common. In 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed it as dogma.

The theological point is straightforward: Mary’s Assumption mirrors Jesus’ resurrection. The Assumption affirms that ordinary people of flesh and blood – like us – are created with the capacity to share divine life. Sr. Joan speaks to this movement between letting go and letting come:

“I know that I have questions. And if we follow the questions, the questions will become our answers. Fear can lead us to rely on old answers, which become a burden. Go where you would not expect to go. Just stumble along and out of that will come light for the next step.”

*(Slight pause)*

Now Pat Campbell will read from the first chapter of the gospel of Luke. Then Jim De Quattro will offer questions and silence for reflection. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1** [Lk 1:39-56](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/1?39) **(Pat Campbell)**

Our first reading is about “letting come.”

Mary set out
and traveled to the hill country in haste
to a town of Judah,
where she entered the house of Zechariah
and greeted Elizabeth. **(Betty:** share slide 1.**)**
When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,
“Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled.”

Mary remained with her about three months
and then returned to her home. (**Betty:** stop slide 1.)

**QUESTIONS 1 (Jim De Quattro)**

When have you felt something unexpected taking life and growing in you?

Remember and savor a time when someone recognized something in you and expressed joy or appreciation.

With whom do you share your most important news? What do you hope for from them?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 2 w image, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty: Now Sr. Jennie Lechtenberg will lead us into the Magnificat.

**IN PLACE OF READING 2 - Mary’s Song by Millie Rieth (Jennie Lechtenberg)**

Mary's song urges us to recognize God's activity in the everydayness of our world. Mary points to where we can find God working among us – and where we will find our own salvation. Let’s listen to the Magnificat, Mary’s great song of praise, as composed by Millie Rieth, a former member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary. [Ad-lib as you wish.] Then questions will lead us into silence.

**(Betty: Share slide 3. Play audio mp3.)**

[Lk 1:39-56](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/1?39)

My soul doth glory in your love, O Lord.

My soul doth glory in your love, O Lord.

For you gazed on your servant with compassion,

And you reached out and took me by the hand.

Great are you, God, and Holy is your name.

**QUESTIONS 2 (Jim De Quattro)**

How do you experience the goodness and mercy of God?

Ponder a time when you hoped God would reach out and take you by the hand.

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 4, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Betty:** Now Ann Masters will offer further reflections for us to consider.

**READING 3:**  **(Ann Masters)**

We have often prayed to “live the questions.” Part of that task is letting go. And part is letting come.

Mary and Elizbeth, both with unexpected pregnancies, were living the question together. The gospels return to Mary at moments of question – when she fled to Egypt, when she pondered Jesus at the Temple growing into a man; when she invited his action at the wedding at Cana; when she followed him to Calvary. Learning to let go and let come each day. Have you ever turned to Mary as a companion in your questions? *(brief pause)*

Dayna Cunningham writes, “In moments of uncertainty – and Lord knows that is where we are now – knowing can feel like the only safety. But in fact**, knowing and certainty are the biggest risk to our safety**.” We have to let them go.

And we have to let curiosity come forth. The key is to ask “the **least comforting** and **most disruptive** questions.” We need to “probe [those hard] questions and then explore what is ours to do in the face of them.”

Hard questions might be about us. Or they may be questions that the world presents to us – like Sister Helen Prejean in 1981, saying yes when asked to correspond with a man on death row. Like Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange in the early 1800s, opening her Baltimore home to teach Black children to read.

“To bring about change, it is critical to feel the suffering of the world. To feel the knee on your neck. Don’t avert your gaze.”

Ponder, for instance, how “racism against Black bodies has shaped the economy, the polity, and the culture. Absorb the weight of the suffering… [and ask this] important question: Are we letting ourselves off the hook?” *[Pause.]*

Comfort can seduce us. Reality asks questions that disrupt our lives. Are we willing to live those questions? Can we borrow Mary’s courage to let go… and to let come?

**QUESTIONS 3 (Jim De Quattro)**

What questions pester your heart these days?

What would it be like for you to live into the question, to stumble forward, more than to seek answers?



**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 5, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

Betty: Richard McGinnis will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Richard McGinnis)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. That helps us to glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long pause.]

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards. Who would like to begin our sharing?

(Sharing)

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

Now Greg Campbell will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Greg Campbell)**

Our response will be: Holy One, hear our prayer.

In gratitude for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and for the questions that we ask together, we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

For the courage to live with solidarity and with life-giving uncertainty, we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

For the grace that lets us be vulnerable in relationship to those who are themselves vulnerable, we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

For the wisdom to recognize the important questions, to ask them and to live them, we pray. Holy One, hear our prayer.

Now let’s remember the feelings and prayers that arose in us as we shared reflections, and also the prayers we carry with us. *[Pause.]*

Now, for what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.) Holy One, hear our prayer.

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

*(Pause.)*

**OFFERTORY (Judith Galleazzi)**

Reality asks us to notice what we have that others need. It might be time or money to offer direct help. Or it might be our voices and our influence to change unjust systems. What can you commit to do this week? *[Pause.]*

Let us pray. Generous God, we thank you for your gifts. We commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to your abundant love. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Jo’Ann De Quattro)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Holy One, make us your bread of abundance. Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

And now Norb Bufka will lead us in Our Father, Our Mother.

**OUR FATHER (Norb)**

Now let us join our hearts with all who seek justice and peace throughout the world:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, Our Mother, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Betty Thompson)**

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom, and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in this world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done.

Amen.

*[Slight pause}*

With Linda, now let’s lift up our hearts to the Lord!

**CLOSING SONG: Psalm 66 by Roc O’Connor (Linda)**

Refrain: Lift up your hearts to the Lord,
praise God's gracious mercy!
Sing out your joy to the Lord,
whose love is enduring.

Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth!
Praise the name above all names!
Say to God, "How wondrous your works,
how glorious your name!" Refrain

God's right hand made a path through the night,
split the waters of the sea.
All creation, lift up your voice:
Our God set us free. Refrain

Listen now, all you servants of God,
As I tell of these great works.
Blessed be the Lord of my life,
whose love shall endure! Refrain

**RESOURCES**

Settling in: Prayer by Mary Davis

“I Say Yes, My Lord” -- Lyrics - <https://stambrose.us/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/I-Say-Yes-My-Lord-CANTOR.pdf> YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6V0mU2KQmuU>

Final Blessing: “A Franciscan Blessing” - https://franciscanaction.org/prayers/

Intro to Theme, Reflection, and throughout:

“The Assumption of Mary,” Wikipedia - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assumption_of_Mary>

Article 966, Catechism of the Catholic Church - <http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p123a9p6.htm>

“Assumption of Mary: Jesus first, then us” by theologian and scripture scholar Fr. George Smiga, NCR 2018 - <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/scripture-life/assumption-mary>

Sr. Mary G. McGlone, a sister of St. Joseph, “Solemnity of the Assumption” in NCR Sunday Resources, <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/aug-15-2021-solemnity-assumption-blessed-virgin-mary>

“Occasional Papers,” Summer 2021 edition, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, for:

* Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, title of article
* Dayna Cunningham, title of article