**The Assumption Cycle. B. 2018.**

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Blessed Mother Mary, a woman for all ages. We know only very little about this Jewish girl, Mary. We **don’t know her date of birth or date of death.** Through Scripture, we know where she lived, her parents and some of her friends and relatives. The only place we get Mary’s story is in the first Chapter of Luke. So the question remains: **Why does she persist through the ages**? What is her appeal? Why do people flock at her shrines all over the world? Why is Mary the most popular name in the world?

**When we first meet her through the scripture, she was the object of an ugly rumor:** she is pregnant without her husband. We come face-to-face with a young woman who chose to challenge the social norms by embracing her pregnant state without the bond of marriage. According to the cultural norm of the time, her fiancé, Joseph, was expected to deny her and her pregnancy and to put her at a distance. That she was innocent, invaded by the Spirit, was not believed. Thus people down the ages who have suffered false rumors, **who have had their reputations soiled, who have been misunderstood, who are unwed mothers; all these people have identified with Mary**.

Then we encounter in Mary, her **very human anxiety and fear**. What is this “**mother of God business**”? “How can this be”? She asked the angel! **What about joseph?** How can this happen? **How can I do this**? She was concerned and scared and full of questions. Mary is all those people who, throughout the ages, have cried out, “**How can I tackle this challenge**”? **How can I survive**?

When her son was born, the shepherds and angels rejoiced, but the power brokers were conspiring to kill her baby. Parents today and down the ages, faced with so many soul assassins have identified with Mary. They know **well enough there are people out there: the drug pushers, the media which promotes uncommitted sex, the preachers of false values**-who are after their children in order to kill their spirits, trample their souls. Parents know what **Mary knew and fear what she feared**.

After Jesus’ birth, Mary has to flee with her husband and child and become a **refugee in a foreign lan**d. And so she immediately joins the countless displaced persons, the **homeless huddling in the world doorways and sleeping on the nation’s grates, and the thirty million refugees walking the earth today. These lonely ones who need to be lifted up are cousins under the skin, and they can identify with Mary.**

When Jesus is an adolescent, he becomes lost from her for a while in Jerusalem. **Now Mary becomes every parent in history who cannot communicate with a tee**nager, who loses someone to gangs or drugs, whose children have joined the runaways roaming the streets, exploited by the sex trade, abused and beaten. Many can identify with Mary here.

**At some point, this wife and mother became a widow**. She buried her husband, and everyone who has lost a spouse cries Mary’s tears, feels the void in his or her belly and returns home to an empty bed. When her son is old enough he leaves home to begin his mission, while his widowed mother stays behind. Suddenly **every mother and father who sees their children grow up and leave them behind**-especially those in nursing homes- know what Mary is feeling in her heart.

When she hears rumors that her son is preaching nearby, she goes with some relatives to see him, but cannot get near because of the crowds. She has to be content with sending word that she is out there to see him. But gesturing to the crowd, Jesus asks, “**Who are my mother and my brothers and my sisters”**? **Everyone who does the will of God is my mother and brother and sister**”. It sounded like a put down message telling his mother to go home. Every little person on the sideline, off-center, **who doesn’t understand what is going on but simply clings fast to God’s will, can identify with Mary**.

**Then her son was caught, betrayed by one whom Mary had over the house for dinner many times**. Her son was brought to a mock trial, beaten and humiliated and hanged on a public cross. Mary comes to see him; **every inch of her mind and body straining to go to him, but she is forced by the soldiers to keep her distance.** And, suddenly, **every parent who has seen their child carted off to prison, every parent who wants to help their grown children deal with alcoholism or other addictions, every parent whose children are living in sin and every parent who witnesses such crucifixions - are told to keep their distance can identify with Mary as they pray and suffer in silence.**

Finally, **she cradles the dead and broken body of her only son in her arms, and sobs uncontrollably**. There she is once more; every parent who has lost a child, any friend who has lost a friend, any classmate who has lost classmate through overdose or gunshot can identify with Mary of the Pieta.

Thus Mary is a pilgrim who savored the ups and downs of human life. In **all of the unfairness of life, she remained faithful to the will of God**. Thus, Mary is a mentor and model and a fearless woman for all ages. **Let us rejoice and be glad on this glorious Feast of her Assumption.**