

The Assumption of Mary (Solemnity, August 15th)

Revelation 11:19-12:6, 10—The Ark and the Woman in Heaven

1. Heavenly Temple: “God’s temple in heaven was opened” (11:19)
2. Heavenly Ark: “the ark of his covenant” “within his temple” (11:19; cf. 2 Macc 2:4-8)
3. Heavenly Queen “in heaven, a woman” “crowned with twelve stars” (12:1)

Psalm 45:10, 11, 12, 16—The Queen Stands at Your Right Hand (Responsorial)

1. Divine King: “Your throne, O God, endures for ever and ever” (v. 6)
2. Queen Mother: “at your right hand stands the queen in gold” (v. 10-13)

Luke 1:39-56—The Visitation to Elizabeth

<u>The Ark of the Covenant</u>	<u>The Virgin Mary</u>
1. The glory of the Lord and the cloud cover the Tabernacle (containing the Ark) and “overshadow” (<i>episkiazen</i>) them (Exod 40:34-35, cf. v. 3)	1. The Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and the power of the Most High “overshadows” (<i>episkiasei</i>) her (Luke 1:35)
2. David “ <i>arose and went</i> ” to the hill country of <i>Judah</i> to bring up “the ark of God” (2 Samuel 6:2)	2. Mary “ <i>arose and went</i> ” to the hill country of <i>Judah</i> to visit Elizabeth (Luke 1:39)
3. David exclaims: “How can <i>the ark of the Lord come to me?</i> ” (2 Samuel 6:9)	3. Elizabeth exclaims: “And why is this granted to me, that <i>the mother of my Lord</i> should <i>come to me?</i> ” (Luke 1:43)
4. David “ <i>leaped</i> ” before the Ark as it was brought in “ <i>with shouting</i> ” (2 Samuel 6:15-16)	4. John “ <i>leapt</i> ” in Elizabeth’s womb at the sound of Mary’s voice and Elizabeth cried “ <i>with a loud shout</i> ”: (Luke 1:41-42)
5. The Ark remained in hill country, in the house of Obed-Edom, for “ <i>three months</i> ” (2 Samuel 6:11)	5. Mary remained in hill country, in Elizabeth’s house, “ <i>three months</i> ” (Luke 1:56)

The Living Tradition

Athanasius of Alexandria: O noble Virgin, truly you are greater than any other greatness. For who is your equal in greatness, O dwelling place of God the Word? ... O [Ark of the] Covenant, clothed with purity instead of gold! You are the Ark in which is found the golden vessel containing the true manna, that is, the flesh in which divinity resides...

[Y]ou carry within you the feet, the head, and the entire body of the perfect God..... you are God's place of repose. (Athanasius, *Homily from the Papyrus of Turin*)¹

Jacob of Serug: The Mother, Virgin and blessed, was even more beautiful than the Ark full of mysteries of the house of God... While the Ark was being carried, David had danced for joy... *He typified in figure the way of Mary with John [the Baptist], for also that maiden was the Ark of the Godhead.* (Jacob of Serug, *Homily III on the Mother of God*, 671 [5th-6th century A.D.])²

The Ark of the Covenant

1. Ten Commandments
2. Golden Urn of Manna
3. Staff of Aaron that Budded

Mary, the New Ark

1. "Word" made "Flesh"
2. "Bread of Life" from Heaven
3. Heavenly "High Priest"

John of Damascus: Today the holy, incomparable virgin enters the heavenly sanctuary that lies above the universe... *Today the holy, living ark of the living God*, the one who carried her own maker within herself, *comes to her rest in the temple of the Lord not made by hands. David—her ancestor and God's—leaps for joy; the angels join in the dance...* (John of Damascus, *On Dormition of Mary*, II.2 [8th century A.D.])³

Pope Pius XII: [S]ome [theologians] have employed the words of the psalmist: "Arise, O Lord, into your resting place: you and the ark, which you have sanctified" (Psalm 132:8); and have looked upon *the Ark of the Covenant, built of incorruptible wood and placed in the Lord's temple, as a type of the most pure body of the Virgin Mary*, preserved and exempt from all the corruption of the tomb and raised up to such glory in heaven. (Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* no. 26 [1950])

Pope Benedict XVI: *The passage from the Book of Revelation also indicates another important aspect of Mary's reality. As the living Ark of the Covenant, she has an extraordinary destiny of glory because she is so closely united to the Son whom she welcomed in faith and generated in the flesh, as to share fully in his glory in Heaven. This is what the words we have heard suggest: "A great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun..." (Rev 12:1) ...Mary, Mother of God, full of grace, fully docile to the action of the Holy Spirit, already lives in God's Heaven with her whole being, body and soul.*" (Benedict XVI, "Homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption," August 15, 2011).⁴

¹ Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 106.

² Jacob of Serug, *On the Mother of God* (Crestwood: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998), 74.

³ See Daley, *On the Dormition of Mary*, 204-205.

⁴ More recently, see Pope Benedict XVI, "Homily Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (August 15, 2011)," available at www.vatican.va.