

## Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

<i>First Reading</i>	Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab
<i>Response</i>	...at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 45:10, 11, 12, 16
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 Corinthians 15:20-27
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	Mary is taken up to heaven; a chorus of angels exults.
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 1:39-56

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, body and soul into Heaven. And this feast day is a great feast day, wonderful feast day, but it's also one of those Marian feasts that's very challenging to preach on, because it's not immediately apparent how the readings are chosen and why they're chosen ... unless you read them in light of both the Old Testament and in light of the living tradition of the Church.

So that's what we're going to do today. We're going to look at the Gospel reading of the day, and we're going to go back to the first reading, which in this case isn't from the Old Testament; it's from the book of Revelation. Notice that — Revelation, not Revelations. There's no *s*. And then we'll look at the psalm, and we'll see how they all link up with one another.

So I'm doing the Mass of the Day for the Solemnity of the Assumption, and the Gospel for this Mass is very confusing. So we're celebrating the Solemnity of Mary's Assumption in Heaven, and you might think, "Okay, great, this is what we'll get — the biblical account of Mary's Assumption into Heaven." But of course we don't, so instead the Church (because we don't have one) ... instead the Church gives us the Gospel of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. So why does the Church pick that Gospel for today. Let's read it, and then we'll explain why. So in Luke 1:39-56, we read these words:

In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and she entered the house of Zechari'ah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb;

and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” And Mary said...

Here we have the great Magnificat of Mary:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden.  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed;  
for he who is mighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.

And his mercy is on those who fear him  
from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,  
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
and exalted those of low degree;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent empty away.

He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
as he spoke to our fathers,  
to Abraham and to his posterity for ever.”

And Mary remained with her about three months, and returned to her home.<sup>1</sup>

So again, why does the Church pick this Gospel? Now there are two ways to explain it. Some people might explain it by simply assuming, well, the Gospel reading has to be from the Gospel. First point. The Gospels don't contain any

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

account of Mary's Assumption. Second point. The Gospels only contain a few stories of Mary, and they're mostly associated with the Nativity, so we'll pick just something from the Gospels about the Nativity, and this one features Mary prominently, so we'll put that in the lectionary.

That's the kind of facile or easy explanation for this text. And it's the one I used to have. I didn't understand why we read the Visitation from Mary to Elizabeth on the feast of the Assumption, until I started to study the writings of the ancient Church Fathers and contemporary writers on the Church's theology of Mary.

And what I quickly realized is that — or maybe slowly realized over time — was that it's not just Jesus who was prefigured by the Old Testament and then revealed in the New. It's also Mary. Jesus isn't the only person in the New Testament who had ancient prefigurations about him in Jewish Scripture that then come to fulfillment in the New Testament.

The same thing is true about Mary. And in this case, the account of Mary's Visitation to Elizabeth is a classic text going back to ancient times that was read typologically as not only giving us an account of Mary visiting Elizabeth, but also revealing to us implicitly that Mary isn't just the Mother of Jesus; she's also the true Ark of the Covenant, the new Ark of the Covenant.

Now, I don't have time to go into this in great detail, but if you want to look at this in more, I have a whole chapter on this — actually, a whole book on it — on typology in this book, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary: Unveiling the Mother of the Messiah*. And the whole book is about looking at Old Testament prefigurations like Eve, the Ark, the queen mother and others, and showing how they're fulfilled in the life of Mary as described for us in the Gospels and in the New Testament. So if you check that out, you'll get more detail.

But for now, basically the point is this: If you look at the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth in light of the Old Testament account of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant — the golden box that contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments that was considered to be the holy dwelling place of God that went in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle — when you compare the account of David bringing the

Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem in 2 Samuel 6, with the account of Mary going up to the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth in Luke 1, there are several striking parallels that show that Luke is deliberately drawing out the parallels between when Mary visited Elizabeth and when David brought the Ark into Jerusalem to show that Mary is the true Ark of the Covenant.

So I have a chart here you can look at, so let's just look at that for a moment. In the Old Testament, number one, the Ark of the Covenant is described as having the glory of the Lord and the glory cloud come down upon the tabernacle and "overshadow them" (*episkiazó*) in the book of Exodus 40. In the New Testament, it says the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary, and the power of the Most High "overshadows her" (*episkiazó*, same verb) in the Annunciation.

Second, in the Old Testament in 2 Samuel 6, David "arose and went" to the hill country of Judah to bring up the Ark of God into Jerusalem. In the New Testament, Luke says that Mary "arose and went" to the hill country of Judah to enter the house of Elizabeth (Luke 1).

Third parallel. In the Old Testament, when David comes into the presence of the Ark, he exclaims:

"How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Samuel 6:9)

In the New Testament, when Mary enters into Elizabeth's presence, and this is important ... when Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, she exclaims:

And why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? (Luke 1:43)

So notice, in her words, "mother of my Lord" takes the place of "Ark of the Covenant" in David's words.

Number four, when David is in the presence of the Ark, it says that he leapt before the Ark as it was brought in "with shouting" in 2 Samuel 6. In the Gospel of Luke,

it says that John the Baptist (as an infant) leapt in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary's voice, and that Elizabeth cried out with a loud shout.

So notice, this is very important, Fr. Pablo Gadenz has actually shown in his commentary on Luke — contemporary priest and Catholic biblical scholar — has shown that the language of shouting that's used to describe Elizabeth is something that's tied only to the Ark of the Covenant. It's a liturgical shout. We don't usually think of Elizabeth shouting it. We usually think of her quietly saying, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

But according to Luke, she actually cries out aloud. She shouts it because she's been filled with the Holy Spirit. It's an exclamation, just like David exclaimed in the presence of the Ark.

And then finally, last but certainly not least, number five, in the Old Testament, it says that the Ark of the Covenant remained in the hill country in the house of Obed-edom for "three months". And then in the New Testament, it tells us that Mary remained in the hill country of Judah in Elizabeth's house for "three months."

Now this one always struck me as interesting, because what Luke obviously means is that Mary remains in the house of Elizabeth until the birth of John, because he's told us earlier that Elizabeth was six months with child, and now if she stays with her for three more months, the obvious implication is that she's going to stay until the birth of the child.

So why does he say three months instead of just "until the birth of the child"? Well, scholars have argued — and I think this is right — that Luke is deliberately echoing the account of David bringing up the Ark to Jerusalem, and it remaining in Obed-edom's house for three months. If he had just said, "She stayed there until the birth of John", you would have lost the allusion.

So if just one of these parallels were present, it would be striking. But the fact that there are *five* parallels, moves us into the realm of clarity, really, that Luke is deliberately alluding to the account of the Ark of the Covenant in the Old

Testament in order to reveal to us that because Mary's body has become the dwelling place of the Lord, she is in fact the new Ark of the Covenant. She's the true dwelling place of God on Earth. Her body is holy, and in fact, her body is holier than the Ark, because the Ark of the Covenant was just a golden box that contained tablets of stone. Her body is a living temple for the living Word of God made flesh. And that comes about through the Holy Spirit overshadowing her at the Annunciation, just as it overshadowed the Ark at its completion.

Okay, now you might still be thinking, "Well, okay Dr. Pitre, what does any of that have to do with the Assumption of Mary? Okay, I can see how she's the new Ark of the Covenant, but what's the relationship between that and the feast today?" Well, in order to see that, you have to go to the first readings. Let's look at the Gospel in light of the first reading. And in this case, the first reading isn't from the Old Testament. It's from the book of Revelation 12 — actually, chapter 11 and 12. It's the end of 11, starting with verse 19, going into the beginning of chapter 12. This is John the Evangelist or sometimes you'll hear him called John the Revelator — that's an old phrase. But John the author of the Apocalypse, this is his vision of the heavenly Ark of the Covenant.

Now before I read this vision, let me just put it into context for a second here. In first century Judaism, everyone understood that after David put the Ark in the temple (and Solomon built the temple) that the Ark remained there for hundreds of years until the sixth century before Christ. Because in the sixth century, the Babylonians came and they destroyed the temple. They burned Jerusalem to the ground.

And according to the book of Maccabees — 2 Maccabees 2 — before the temple was destroyed, Jeremiah the prophet (who was also a priest) took the Ark of the Covenant out of the temple, because he knew the Babylonians were coming to destroy it, and he brought it to Mount Nebo, which is the mountain that Moses had gone up to see the Promised Land. It's on the eastern side of the river Jordan. It's not Mount Sinai in the Arabian desert. This is Mount Nebo, which overlooked the Promised Land where Moses saw the Promised Land, but he died on that mountain. He didn't get to go in.

So Jeremiah brings the Ark ... he goes east across the Jordan, brings it to Mount Nebo, and he hides it there in the mountain in a cave. And 2 Maccabees 2 tells us that Jeremiah said that the location of that Ark would remain hidden until God revealed His mercy and until the glory cloud came down again from Heaven.

So if you fast forward to the time of Jesus, these traditions about the Ark of the Covenant, they were well known. Everybody would have known, number one, that there was no Ark in the temple ... that the temple rebuilt after the Babylonian exile was missing something really important. It was missing the Ark of the Covenant. It would be today like you going into St. Peter's in Rome and there being no tabernacle, no Blessed Sacrament. It would still be a holy place, still be a beautiful place, but it would be empty of the thing that most makes it holy — the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Same thing was true of the temple. It was a holy place, sacrifices were offered there, but there was no Ark.

The second thing that every Jew knew at the time of Christ was that one day the Ark would come back. According to Jeremiah's prophecy in 2 Maccabees, its location would be revealed. But nobody knew exactly what had happened to it, because when Jeremiah puts it in the cave, the location of the cave disappears. People can't find it. They don't know ... it miraculously disappears.

So there was this expectation that one day, the location of the Ark would be revealed. And of course that led to this day, to the quest for the lost Ark of the Covenant is a very popular theme. So what happens in Revelation 11 is that John sees where the Ark is; its location is unveiled to him. And the location that it gives here is not of the earthly Ark of Mount Nebo. It's of an Ark in Heaven. This is what he sees, and this is the reading for today, Revelation 11:19. He says this:

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple...

Okay, pause here for just a second. In order to understand this verse, you have to understand that in ancient Judaism, the idea was that the earthly temple was a kind of replica or analogy of the true temple that was in Heaven. And just as in the earthly temple, the Ark of the Covenant is within the Holy of Holies (the innermost

sanctuary), so too when John says he saw the temple open, what he's really seeing is the doors of the temple open. And he's able to see all of the way into the Holy of Holies. And what he sees in there is the Ark within his temple.

But it's not the earthly temple; it's the temple in Heaven. So that's what's going on here. Now what's fascinating about this is as soon as John sees the Ark in the temple in Heaven, all of a sudden the image switches and now he sees a woman in Heaven, almost as if the two images are superimposed on one another. It's something that happens frequently in the book of Revelation, where John will sometimes use two symbols to describe one reality. And scholars have suggested this, that the Ark and the woman are just two ways of talking about this one reality.

So once he's seen the Ark in Heaven in the temple, now all of a sudden he sees a woman in Heaven. And this is what he says:

And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth; she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God...

Then it skips down to verse 10:

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come..."

Okay, so what's going on here? Why is this the first reading for the feast of the Solemnity of the Assumption? And the answer is simple. If Mary is the true Ark of



the Covenant on Earth — at the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit overshadows her like it overshadowed the Ark and God begins to dwell in her in Christ — then when John sees this mysterious apocalyptic vision of the Ark in Heaven and of a woman in Heaven who is the mother of the Messiah and who's wearing a crown of twelve stars (she's a heavenly queen), since ancient times, this vision has been interpreted as a vision of Mary in Heaven as mother of the Messiah ... and not just as the mother but as the heavenly Ark of the Covenant.

And I'll quote from ancient writers in just a second, but I just want to help you understand that. If you think about it in this way, if Mary's body is the dwelling place of God on Earth — if Mary's body is the true Ark of the Covenant, then it's fitting that at the end of her life, that body, that sacred Ark, would not remain on Earth in a human grave or a human tomb, but that it would be taken up to its rightful place in the heavenly Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple of God. That's the logic of choosing this vision of the heavenly Ark of the Covenant on the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

Because she's not just the mother of the Messiah; she's also the Ark of the Covenant. And the Ark of the Covenant isn't just her soul, it's her body. So all of us, ordinary Christians, when we die our hope is that our soul will enter into Heaven and that on the last day we will receive our bodies in the resurrection of the dead. But the Church teaches that Mary has a singular gift. Because her body was the Ark of the Covenant on Earth, it's fitting that her body and her soul would be caught up into Heaven to dwell in the heavenly Holy of Holies in the heavenly temple with Christ for all eternity ... and that what John is giving us here in this vision is an apocalyptic description of Mary that reveals her to be (among other things) the queen mother of the kingdom of God *and* the true Ark of the Covenant.

So again, I know I don't have time to get into this in detail. Please, I cover all this in depth in *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*. You can check it out there. For now, that's just the basic point. Now that's the first reading for today. What about the responsorial psalm?

Okay, in this case, it's pretty easy. If you turn to psalm 45 ... psalm 45 is a famous enthronement psalm in the Old Testament in which the psalmist addresses both the king *and* the queen. And so it says this in psalm 45:6

Your divine throne endures for ever and ever.

This is addressing the king.

Your royal scepter is a scepter of equity;  
you love righteousness and hate wickedness.  
Therefore God, your God, has anointed you  
with the oil of gladness above your fellows;  
your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia.  
From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad;  
daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor;  
at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Alright, so this psalm is being addressed to an Israelite king, probably on the day of his enthronement. And it's also describing the fact that to his right stands the queen. Now this is not his bride, this is not his wife. This is arguably and likely the queen mother. Because if you look at the Davidic kingdom, it's very consistent that the wives of the king are not the queen, because sometimes you'll have more than one. But the mother of the king is the queen mother.

You can see this in the books of Kings where Solomon, when he's made king, brings out a throne, puts it at his right hand and has his mother sit on the throne as queen, because she's the queen mother. I have a whole chapter on this in the book *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of Mary*. So in this case, though, what it's showing is that the king and the queen are together on his enthronement.

Well, fast forward to Jesus. Since ancient times, this psalm has been interpreted as Messianic prophecies of Jesus. They're not just about David; they're not just about the kings of Israel. They're also about Christ. So just as Christ fulfills this psalm about an anointed king who sits on his throne, so too Mary fulfills this psalm, this description of the queen mother.

And this is so crucial: Where is Jesus' throne? It is *not* in Jerusalem. It is *not* on Earth. It's a heavenly throne that He mounts when He ascends into Heaven. So if He is the king and He ascends into Heaven to sit on His throne, then how will the queen mother stand at His right hand? How does Mary fulfill this psalm? By being assumed into Heaven, body and soul, and standing at the right hand of Her Son, the king.

So what the Church has done then, when we look at the Old Testament in light of the New, and the New in light of the Old, is giving us a kind of pastiche of these various passages where Mary is being revealed as the true Ark of the Covenant (Luke 1), shown to be the woman and queen who is in Heaven, who is also the heavenly Ark, and then described as the queen mother of Psalm 45, who stands next to her Son when He sits on His heavenly throne.

So these are all passages that point to the biblical mystery of Mary's bodily Assumption into Heaven. We don't get a biblical description of Mary's Assumption, of the event, right? But we have Scriptural revelation about the truth of her being in Heaven as queen mother and as the true Ark of the Covenant. Because there's only one place that's fitting for the Ark, and it's not in some grave in Jerusalem. It's in the heavenly Holy of Holies. And there's only one place fitting for a queen, and it's not in the earthly city of Jerusalem. It's in the heavenly kingdom of God.

Alright, so in closing, as I like to say every now and then, you don't have to take my word for it. Just listen to the writings of the Church Fathers — St. Athanasius the Great, one of the greatest saints and doctors of the Church, revered by Catholics and Orthodox alike. In his beautiful *Homily on the Papyrus of Turin*, says this about Mary:

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 New] 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...* You carry within you the feet, the head, and the entire body of the perfect God ... you are God's place of repose.<sup>2</sup>

Wow, amazing, amazing. That's from the 4th century AD. This is not the Catholic Church making this up in the Middle Ages or making it up to respond to Protestant criticisms about Mary. This is the ancient Christian faith. Mary is the Ark of the Covenant.

Here's another one. One of my favorite writers on Mary was known as Jacob of Serug. He's not very famous. He's not very well known, especially not in the west. But this guy was amazing. His homilies on Mary are just stunning. And this is what he says about Mary as the Ark:

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.*<sup>3</sup>

That's Jacob of Serug's third homily on the Mother of God. So notice, the idea that the Visitation reveals Mary as the true Ark and that there are parallels between David bringing up the Ark and Mary going to Elizabeth, that's not some newfangled idea. Jacob of Serug is preaching that in the late 5th, early 6th century AD. It's over a thousand years old. This is just the ancient Christian faith. This is how Christians have interpreted that Gospel that we read on this feast day for centuries.

St. John of Damascus, also a Doctor the Church, beloved in the east and west, said this in the 8th century AD:

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*

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<sup>2</sup> Athanasius of Alexandria, *Homily of the Papyrus of Turin* (4th century AD)

<sup>3</sup> Jacob of Serug, *Homily III on the Mother of God*, 671 (5th-6th century AD)

*the Lord not made by hands. David—her ancestor and God’s—leaps for joy; the angels join in the dance.*<sup>4</sup>

That’s *On the Dormition of Mary*. Now this is in the 8th century AD. Notice they’re already celebrating the feast of Mary’s Assumption. There’s a feast day dedicated to it, and so John of Damascus is preaching to his congregation on the mystery of Mary’s Assumption. And what does he use to reveal the mystery of the Assumption? He uses the typology of Mary as the Ark of the Covenant being brought up into the heavenly temple.

And it’s precisely these Scriptural texts and these patristic traditions that led Pope Pius XII in 1950 to define infallibly the dogma, the Catholic dogma, of the bodily Assumption of Mary into Heaven.

So what I find fascinating is that when most people quote Pius XII’s definition of the dogma of Mary’s Assumption, they quote the part where he says, “We declare and define it.” And that’s great. But what they often miss is his Scriptural foundations for it. He’s got a long section where he lays out the Scriptural reasons, as well as the quotes from the Church Fathers, that show Mary’s identity as Ark and how this relates to the Assumption. And so this is what Pius says:

..some [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); 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.<sup>5</sup>

So notice, what Pius is saying here... he’s not just saying, “Mary is assumed into Heaven. I’m the pope; here’s the dogma. It’s purely my authority.” No, he’s looking at Scripture and the Fathers, and he’s saying, “The Fathers recognized that

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<sup>4</sup> John Damascene, *On the Dormition of Mary*, II.2 (8th century AD)

<sup>5</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus: Defining the Dogma of the Assumption*, no. 26

Scripture reveals Mary to be the true Ark of the Covenant, and that the Ark is her body, because her body is the dwelling place of God on Earth.”

Therefore, it’s fitting that her body would not see corruption. This is so cool, because the Jews actually say this, that the Ark was made of acacia wood, which is incorruptible. It doesn’t rot. So just like the Ark was made of incorruptible wood, Mary’s body is incorruptible. It’s not going to rot in a tomb, so it’s going to be caught up into the heavenly Holy of Holies to be incorruptible and holy. So Mary’s holiness is signified by the gold of the Ark. Mary’s incorruptibility of her body is signified by the kind of wood that was used for the Ark. Beautiful, powerful ... and papal.

And then finally, and last and certainly not least, most recently Pope Benedict XVI, in actually preaching on the lectionary for today for the feast of the Assumption, says everything I’ve been saying — or should I say, I say what he said. Anyway, he says this:

*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.”<sup>6</sup>*

That’s from Benedict XVI’s homily on the Assumption from August 15, 2011, right up to today. Ancient times to today, the Church is very clear. The Assumption is not just some dogma that we just made up out of whole cloth. It flows out of the two sources of divine revelation — Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, as interpreted by the living Magisterium, the popes and the bishops in communion with the pope.

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<sup>6</sup> Benedict XVI, “Homily Mass for the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary,” August 15, 2011

So here Pope Benedict is saying, because Mary is the living Ark of the Covenant, then it's fitting that she would be in Heaven not just in her soul but in her body.

And I'll close with that one last point. It's so powerful to think about. If Mary's body is the new Ark, then just as the Ark contained three things in the Old Testament — remember what it contained, the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the golden urn of the manna from Heaven, and then the staff of Aaron that budded, just those three things. Just as the old Ark contained those three things, so Mary's body contains the Word made flesh, the Bread of Life (Jesus Christ), and then the true priest of God.

So just as the old Ark contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments, she has the Word. The old Ark had the manna; she has the Bread of Life. The old Ark had the staff of Aaron; she has the true priest. All that is dwelling within her very woman, and that is why on this day, we celebrate that the holy body of the Blessed Virgin Mary did not suffer corruption, but was assumed through a singular grace of God, body and soul into Heaven.