

Solemnity of the Assumption.

"Mary pondered all these things." All of Mary's memories are forever now alive and present. Mary's memory is such, assumed as she is, that it embraces not only the past, but also the future. Mary remembers the future, and that is the definition of hope.

More than the apostles' and the gospels, Mary's is the only memory contemporaneous to the entire life of Christ.

"Blessed the womb, the breasts" -- Go back to the origins of Jesus, his infancy and even his conception and gestation. Mary is blessed in her radical physicality. And in her unique vocation as mother. She pondered in her heart. Indeed, her breasts and her womb were organs of her memory. Her body remembered and still continued to add data to the remembering.

Mary assumed -- body and soul -- breasts and womb and heart -- is a living memory of the Son of God, a memory with also full understanding.

As St Augustine said, Mary conceived first in her heart and then in her body. But the two moments are inseparable. Mary's heart, now her memory, is her body; her body is her memory of the Son of God and her Son from conception to Ascension. Mary now assumed is a human memory accessible to us at all times.

Mary is our access to Jesus. Ad Jesum per Mariam. As a living act of memory, Mary knows the past, the history of her Son, as the mystery of God. Details she knows as the saving action of God. In Mary assumed into heaven, the memory of Jesus' mysteries is preserved forever in her womb and breasts, as the memory of his Passion is preserved in his hands and feet and side. And of the Resurrection in Thomas's astonished finger. In Mary's memory, because the past is alive, as her ever-present Resurrected Son, then a future, too, is open, founded on a solid foundation of hope.

Our Abbey is named in honor of the Assumption. And this has always had a great importance for us. We identify with the Mother of the Lord. We know her presence. We can say that this abbey was carried in her womb and nursed at her breasts, and that with her we have heard the word of God and observed it. We can say, too, that the people and events that comprise the 56 years of this abbey's life, up to this very moment, comprise also the record and memory of the saving act of God.

A passage from St Bernard can apply both to Mary and, all things being equal, to this Abbey,

and to each of us: "If you love the Lord your God with your whole heart, whole mind, and whole strength, then you will experience as well your own true self, since you perceive that you possess nothing at all for which you love yourself, except in so far as you belong to God...You experience yourself as you are, when you discover that you are an altogether unworthy object even of your own love, except for the sake of him, without whom you are nothing." This, in brief, is the vocation of a Cistercian, professed and lay alike.

Mary loves herself because "he who is mighty has done greath things" for her, who is nothing. As Bernard also says, all her merit is his mercy. And it is the same for us, and for that reason how precious our smallness, our poverty, our weakness. We are a 56 yars old woman, whose womb and breasts are living memories of grace, and whose memory suffers no monopause.

A poem by R.M. Rilke:

Could she be anything other than proud of him
who made the plainest things for her beautiful?
And didn't the house

Become as new because of his voice?

Ah,
surely she must have restrained herself a hundred times
from radiating the joy she had in him.

Mary, now assumed; her memory unrestrained joy; it is that exquisite ineluctable sorrow; it is the knowing as he is known and the grasp of mystery hidden from all ages...it is a memory of the past which is hope for the future, and this is what the Mother of God opens to us, she whose chemistry is God's, forever.

August 15, 2006