

About four years ago, my brother and sister in law found themselves at a crossroads. They had been in the process of adopting a child from California and had been connected with an adoptive mother there for six months. I'm sure they had already begun to dream about what life would be like with a child. But then came the news--the adoptive mother had decided to pull out of the process. They were devastated, obviously, but never lost hope that God had a plan for them.

After praying about it, they decided to try something dramatic. They flew out to California to try to meet with her in person and did this without even knowing if she would agree to meet with them. I can only imagine the nervous energy within them as they landed in California. God, however, was not nervous, He knew exactly what He was going to do. He had an amazing surprise in store for Billy and Maura.

They never ended up meeting with the original adoptive mother. When they got to California, they got a call from the adoption agency that there was an adoptive mother a few hours away in California that had just given birth and was looking for adoptive parents immediately. They knew that this child was meant for them. I will never forget the crazy text message I got from Billy telling me the amazing news. They had come to California wondering if they could salvage a broken adoption process, and they ended up holding their beautiful daughter, Chiara, in their hands that very day.

When I think back on this great moment, I am so grateful for the beautiful way God worked in Billy and Maura's lives. He knew the great love they had for each other and Him. He knew of their desire to share that love with children, so he made a quick way for them to have that desire fulfilled. What a great and awesome God we serve!

Today is a feast about the fulfillment of all desire. When we speak of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we are talking about the amazing way that God fulfilled the desire of the Virgin Mary's heart to be with Him. From the early days of the church, this belief has been passed through the Church's tradition--that Mary was assumed body and soul by God into

Heaven in a singular way. Her Immaculate Heart was free from sin and thus completely full of love for God. So when she came to the end of her earthly journey, God spared her the separation of body and soul that happens for all of us. He took her fully to Himself to reign as the queen of Heaven.

God knows how to respond to our desires. Throughout Mary's life, her heart desired to serve God and others. We see this desire on full display in the Gospel. The beautiful account of Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth makes clear what was in her heart. She hastened to go and serve her cousin Elizabeth, to pour out her love on her cousin who was in need. Her focus was on others, even right after she had been granted the most awesome privilege any human person has ever been or will ever be granted, and she immediately focused on other people and how she could help them!

This great desire to serve God and others comes through loud and clear in the beautiful song of praise that Mary lifts to God which we call the Magnificat. In this joyful song, Mary recognizes that she had been given an awesome gift from God, but then focuses the rest of her prayer on God and his work throughout history. Her whole life was centered on being God's instrument--His "handmaid," ready for whatever mission he gave her. This readiness to serve God gave her the marvelous ability to serve others: Elizabeth, Joseph, Jesus, the apostles and disciples and now all of us.

That impressive vision of St. John which we heard about in the first reading shows the ultimate destination to which God called the Blessed Virgin Mary: to be queen of Heaven, the queen who continues to humbly serve God and others through her powerful intercession; whose Son defeats all the working of that ancient serpent, the devil. This is what Mary's heart always desired, to serve God and others. Now she does this perfectly in the complete joy of the Heavenly kingdom.

God made a way for Billy and Maura to be united in love to the child their hearts desired. He did this in a perfect way with the Blessed Mother of our Savior. Mary was assumed into Heaven because God knew that through

His grace, her heart desired to be perfectly united to Him and others in love. So Mary in her assumption is like a sign pointing us to Heaven. She shows us the reality of Heaven--that it fulfills perfectly the desires of our hearts if they are set on love of God and others. Although we won't get there in the singular way that she did, we can still look forward to the fullness of love in Heaven if our hearts are centered on loving God and our neighbor.

This Sunday, let us take time to examine the desires of our hearts. Are they set on love of God and our neighbor? If not, what are those things which tend to distract them from loving fully. Let's pray for the intercession of Mary, our Queen who was assumed into Heaven, that after her example and by her powerful prayers, our hearts would be purified to love and serve God and others more fully so that we can be set on a path which leads to the fullness of joy united to God in Heaven with her and all of the angels and saints!

*+ Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of Mary, our Queen who You assumed into Heaven. Thank You for pointing us to our goal through her. Jesus thank you for the graces you give to help us to love You and others more perfectly. Holy Spirit, open our hearts to cooperate well with the Lord's grace so that our desire will be set more firmly on Heaven. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. +*