

2021 Assumption

1. **The book of Revelation, from which our first reading is drawn, is a book about the end times.** In biblical language and understanding, the end times begin with the first day of Pentecost, or one could even say with Easter Sunday. From then on, everything is being drawn swiftly to its proper end, like the end point of a massive spiritual big bang. **The Assumption is the first spark of a creature setting off this spiritual big bang.**

2. **In the depths of a solar eclipse everything is shrouded in darkness for a few hours.** The Assumption is like the reappearance of the first sliver of sunlight. The first reading allows us to play with this strange analogy of a solar eclipse, as applied to God's people. **First**, we see a woman clothed with the sun, standing on the moon with a crown of twelve stars on her head. **Next**, we see the same woman, but eclipsed, for she is in the pain of childbirth and a huge red dragon is about to devour her child and pursue her into the desert. **Then**, we hear a voice cry out, "Victory and power and empire forever belong to our God and all authority for his Christ." We are told that God put the woman in a place of safety beyond the reach of the devil. **A spark of light in the dark battle that was raging.**

3. **A real but different kind of eclipse still covers the earth like the curtain of forest-fire smoke that obscures the sunlight.** We still have difficulty understanding the meaning of dark realities of suffering, of death, of extreme weather changes, of political systems gone awry, of common injustices which seem impossible to right. **It's perhaps easier to imagine an interminably long eclipse of human and environmental disaster than to accept a world without the tragedy of suffering and evil.**

4. **The feast of the Assumption, like the first sliver of light after a full eclipse,** dares us with unheard-of realism to accept a state, an experience or glimpse of a permanent cure for suffering and death. All too often we can accept the seeming omnipresence of evil as the final interpretation on everything we experience. Our desolation can be great. **We forget that our desolation can have three meanings:** that we are in the clutches of our own sins and getting free of them seems impossible without repentance; or that God is permitting this suffering in our lives because he is wanting us to become purer as he draws us nearer to him; or that he permits us to experience how radically impotent we are to do anything good because all goodness is a gift from him! We become gloomy, pessimistic Christians, only increasing the eclipse of the light around us. A common conclusion in our sorrow is, "What did I do wrong?" But this may not be the right question. **Rather, we should ask, "What is God doing to me?" or "He who is mighty has done great things for me!"**

5. **During the hours of a lunar or solar eclipse, we can also experience something of the greatness of the solar system,** of which we tiny mortals are but a small part. We can experience a deep wonder about powers at work that are so uncommon to our mundane experience. In a similar way Mary's Assumption should provoke our faith to reach out and in daily life **to lay hold of the Person of Jesus Christ whose power and glory is ours through baptism.** A power and glory that defies the relentless pressure of evil and the ubiquitous presence of death. Mary's Assumption tells us that we were made for glory and joy and not for gloom and darkness! **Evil and suffering is a servant of God's glory and ours!**

6. **At the end of Mass after receiving the same medicine that brought about the reality of the Assumption, we pray:** "We ask you to grant O Lord, that through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin

Mary whom you assumed into heaven, we may be brought to the glory of the resurrection.” Mary’s Assumption is like the emergence of the moon after a lunar eclipse only to be followed by the emergence of the sun after a solar eclipse. The Assumption prefigures the resurrection, our resurrection, even though the resurrection preceded the Assumption and is its spiritual source. “After that comes the end, (end times!) when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having done away with every sovereignty, authority and power and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death.” **Mary in her assumed state is the first fruits of that kingdom that Christ hands over to the Father.**

7. The glory of God is more immense in its power than that which he used to bring the universe into being, which causes our lunar and solar eclipses. The created universe, including ourselves, is something outside God’s own interior life. The Assumption is a reality that bursts forth from the very depths of God’s own life – **a new universe and kingdom fashioned after the pattern of Christ’s resurrection.** In that universe, not only are people and things given life by God’s own almighty power, but they are also brought into an immortal and thus permanent association with him. It is the eclipse of divine glory. The Assumption is the spotlight before the full radiance of the heavenly life. Now **that** is something to hope for, even in the tiny but real short-lived experience of the Eucharist, **our little but immensely powerful spiritual big bang.**