

Homily on the occasion  
of the feast of our Lady of the Assumption  
August 15, 2017

My brother priests, dear religious sisters and brothers, dearest catechists, brothers and sisters in Christ, happy feast day to every one! Viva, Our Lady of Assumption!

These past days we have been shock by news about destructions caused by earthquakes in different countries, including the Philippines ... We are witnesses to the desertification of so many places because of the denudation of our forests due to illegal logging, illegal mining because of irresponsibilities and insensitivities of people. So many man made calamities because of war like the one in Marawi, and of other warring countries in the Middle east; so many reported ISIS activities. We continue to witness how drug users and pushers are being killed like animals... so many ugly faces of material and spiritual poverty seen in all countries of the world. We heard the issue of massive graft and corruption not only by the millions but billions of pesos. Just recently there was a shocking news of a rape case of a 29 year old mother who was murdered together with her 4 year old child in our diocese. We hear of human trafficking, young girls hired as domestic helpers were turned into prostitutes. Our newspapers are full of lies and faked news

perpetuated many times by our own leaders in government. We heard about scandals in the church. We are confronted with the ugliness around us... Inside and outside us.

Today on the feast of Our Lady of the Assumption, God gathered us together as one family. According to Msgr. Sabino Vengco, one of our Filipino mariologists Mary is the Icon of Hope, of the New Woman, New Humanity, New Creation... The Icon of the Good, the Truth and the beautiful. What does this feast tell us? What does it mean to us. We look at Mary and we are assured that despite these ugly things around us we are assured that everything will become beautiful like Mary, "a queen arrayed with gold." Everything that happened to her will also happened to us. Her assumption to heaven will also be ours. The challenge is to be like her, open and sensitive to the will of God. Let us be mindful of her spiritual journey by looking at some very significant moments in her life. We look up to her as our inspiration, whose life we have to emulate.

Let us allow the life of our Blessed Mother to inspire us to achieve fullness of life. Her journey to her assumption started in the womb of her mother Ana who beg for a child in her old age until she and her husband Joachim were gifted with a child Mary.

Her life is obviously a gift, first of all to her parents and the world at large. We are all gifts of God. It is important that we look at every man, including those who are still in their mothers' wombs as gifts and not burdens. Let us continue to be gifts to one another.

During the Annunciation Mary was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit... We remind ourselves that as Christians we too were overshadowed by the Holy Spirit when we were baptized... We are a church filled with the Holy Spirit.... Filled with the Holy Spirit, we say our yes to God... " Be it done to me according to your word." We have to give our part in the work of salvation! We have to say our yes to God's will for us every moment of our lives.

The Visitation which is our gospel reading today. Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth. We will not spend so much time looking into our own difficult situation. We will not focus on our own needs and concerns but we will go out of ourselves and be more concern for the needs of others. If you are touched by God and are sent for a mission, you have to forget self and be more sensitive to the needs of others.

The Miracle at Cana. Here we see Mary as one who is sensitive to the needs of people. This is also an invitation for us to be in touch with our vulnerabilities and the vulnerabilities of others and we allow the Lord to

direct our lives. "Do whatever He tells you." We fix our gaze on Jesus and lead others to Him. Believing truly He has the answers to all our problems.

Mary was standing at the foot of the Cross. An image of a strong woman who persevered in doing good until the end. Let us be like Mary persevere until the end. So many things can put us down, big or small but never-never give up! (My Father just died last July 10, 2017. He taught me what it meant to persevere until the end and how to live my motto: "In Manus Tuas" until the end.

When he was in the ICU, to the surprise of the doctors, his blood pressure was 40/30 and yet he was consciously responding to their questions. While everyone was busy monitoring his condition, I was warned by the doctor that anytime he could die. His kidneys already failed. He could no longer urinate and defecate.

I was beside him and I told him not to be afraid. He still responded to me in kapampangan: "Idaun mu!" "Offer it!" When he said those words, I understood that I was the one who was afraid. I was afraid to let go of him and lose him. Immediately I told him: "Yes Tang," I told him: "Let us offer it together. Let us pray the Lord's prayer as a sign of our total entrustment to the Father!"

Later after they have tried another medicine to raise his blood pressure, and after we have prayed over him: his blood pressure started to rise became more stable. Then his kidneys started to function, he urinated and then he was able to defecate.

After a day, he was allowed to transfer from the ICU to a regular room. Then he started to cry like a baby begging for forgiveness from God, from my mother. Then he shouted: "Guinu, Guinu darun ke ing kaladua ku!" ("Lord, Lord, in your hands I commend my spirit!")

When we changed his diaper and would spray cutasept (an antiseptic) on his bed sores he would shout: "kaplas!" "It terribly hurts!" Then I would embrace him and say: "Tang pati yan idaun mu , ala nakang tatagan keng sarili mu idaun mu ngan king Dios!" Then he would calm down and would no longer avoid the antiseptic being sprayed on his bed sores. I could feel that he really was offering everything until the end.) Only those who will persevere until the end are worthy of the kingdom. Let us pray for perseverance in our faith!

The assurance for us is whatever Mary attained and acquired, we will also reach and acquire... Her dignity, her victory and glory will be ours!

The gospel reading today reminds us that the relationship of our Blessed Mother Mary with Jesus is not just because she conceived Him in her womb and gave birth to Him but because she herself is a listener and doer of the Word of God. This is for us the way to enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus: by listening and doing God's will every day of our lives. We too like Mary are called to enter into a real relationship of love with God by becoming listeners and doers of the Word of God. In this way we grow in our knowledge and love for God.

Fr. Tomas Green, SJ in his book *Prayer and Common Sense*, said that to be holy means to become like Jesus and to share His passion in doing the will of the Father. This is what Therese of Avila meant when she said that in doing the will of God, she is like someone running on top of burning charcoals. She wanted to do things ardently and immediately. Therefore, for us to be holy we have to live out our calling as Christians, as Pastoral workers and catechists with passion, with life, with zest, with fire, like Mary and Jesus whose hearts burn with desire to accomplish the Father's will!

Be aware that we are men and women overshadowed by the Holy Spirit because of Baptism, that we are asked to engage ourselves in God's work and business... be involved in the problems of people, recognized that your giftedness is a gift of God... then "Go to Jesus and Do

whatever He tells you..” Do not get tired in doing what is good! Persevere until the end. Look at the Image of our Lady! Express your faith with conviction that we will become beautiful like Mary if we are faithful and passionate in doing God's will everyday of our lives! Amen.