

A Glimpse of the 'Bigger Picture'
August 15, 2021, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Gospel of Luke 1:39-56
Fr. John

The Feast of the Assumption acknowledges that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was assumed into heaven bodily - that is without the physical corruption that consumes our bodies after death. This has been part of our Catholic tradition since the earliest centuries of the Church.

We might view this event as a fitting tribute to Mary, whom we honour, not only as the mother of the Saviour but who plays a very unique part in representing humanity's response to God's initiative of entering our human condition in the person of Jesus.

However, while this is a wonderful thing that happened to Mary, what is its significance for the rest of us?

Perhaps the opening line in the song or canticle attributed to Mary in the gospel of St. Luke, may give us a clue: 'My soul magnifies the Lord...'

When we **magnify** something, we make it bigger [as with a magnifying glass]. Mary's understanding of God and how He works was greatly magnified and indeed overwhelmed by his plan for providing a human presence in the world and the universe which He created. Mary's people, the People of Israel had seen their share of prophets over the centuries - people who spoke on God's behalf. However, they never in their wildest dreams, would have anticipated His **personal** presence in their midst.

The problem that most of us have is that, unlike Mary, we don't see God in a magnifying way. In fact we often make Him smaller by confining Him in a box of our own imagining and our own set of rules and regulations.

Recently I was listening to a series of talks on the relationship of faith and science. One of the presentations traced the history of human understanding of the universe. It began with a belief that the earth was the centre of the universe with the sun, the stars, and planets all revolving around it. Later it was thought that the sun was the centre of everything. Still later it was noted that the sun itself was only one star among millions that made up the Milky Way Galaxy. And only in the last century has the science of astronomy discovered that our galaxy is only one of billions of others in the universe. Indeed how our understanding of the universe itself has been magnified!

It has been said that we, human beings, exist within three narratives. There's *my* story, *our* story, and *the* story.

The 'my' story consists of my personal world and how I as an individual experience it.

'Our story' relates to the environment that has shaped us, like our race, religion, or whatever community that has moulded our thinking and living patterns.

Finally there is '**the** story' - that which stretches beyond our personal and communal experience. It is the reality of all that exists.

While these stories ebb and flow into each other, there is somewhat of less overlap when it comes to 'the story' - the universal one, the BIG picture.

This is where Mary's 'Magnificat' is her recognition of that big picture. It was not God that was magnified but Mary's perception that was enhanced and filled her with such great joy. And not only her, but Elizabeth as well and even the child within her womb would leap with joy.

The belief that Mary's body escaped corruption after death becomes a further sign that [as St. Paul would put it] all things are restored in Christ.

Even as science becomes aware of an ever-expanding universe, may our faith and comprehension be magnified in gratitude for what the Almighty has done for us and holy is his name.