

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: DAY

LECTIONARY #622

READING I Revelation 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab

A reading from the Book of Revelation

God's temple in heaven was opened,
and the ark of his covenant could be seen in the temple.

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun,
with the moon under her feet,
and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to
give birth.

Then another sign appeared in the sky;
it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns,
and on its heads were seven diadems.

Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky
and hurled them down to the earth.

Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth,
to devour her child when she gave birth.

She gave birth to a son, a male child,
destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod.

Her child was caught up to God and his throne.

The woman herself fled into the desert
where she had a place prepared by God. »

You are narrating a vision filled with powerful imagery that requires a grand and solemn tone worthy of the cosmic events described here.

Speak in a positive tone of the "sign," for it refers to the woman chosen by God. All the symbols are significant, so be sure to stress each one. That she is pregnant and in childbirth is surprising information; be sure you don't make it sound ordinary or insignificant. Announce "another sign" with a negative tone, for now you are introducing the archenemy who seeks the lives of the woman and her child. This is indeed a powerful adversary!

Avoid cheap dramatics, but be sure to convey the destructive horror that threatens mother and child.

Despite the circumstances, convey a sense of peace as you announce the child's birth.

The peace is short-lived; with energy and quickened tempo speak of these efforts to secure safety.

READING I A woman clothed with the sun, accompanied with moon and stars: the image is stunning and dramatic. But who is this woman? She is given no name, simply referred to as "a woman," who gives birth to a child. Revelation and other apocalyptic writings are filled with multifaceted symbolism open to a variety of interpretations. An important clue as to the woman's identity is the connection that Revelation has with the Gospel of John. The language of this mysterious passage echoes some of the language of John. In John's Gospel, the

mother of Jesus is never identified as "Mary," but is twice referred to simply as "woman," both times by Jesus, first at the wedding at Cana and then from the cross. The designation as "woman" in Revelation and her giving birth to a male child who is destined to rule all the nations readily identifies this unnamed woman as the mother of Jesus. Given the multiple symbols possible, the woman has sometimes been understood as an image for Israel or the Church. Mary brings these symbols together; she is the mother of Jesus who, born from Israel, fulfilled Israel's hopes and

promises, and she is the mother of the Church, the first disciple, and a symbol of the Church itself.

Whether understood as Israel, the mother of Jesus, or the Church, the woman faces a cosmic conflict. The seven-headed dragon, a fierce and violent beast, is determined to devour the newborn child. The dragon, strong as it is, does not win, for the child is rescued, even caught up to the throne of God, signifying a divine saving action for the child. The woman's fleeing into the desert to the place prepared by

Then I heard a loud **voice** in heaven say:
 “Now have **salvation** and **power** come,
 and the **Kingdom** of our **God**
 and the **authority** of his **Anointed One**.”

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 45:10, 11, 12, 16 (10bc)

R. The queen stands at your right hand, arrayed in gold.

The queen takes her place at your right hand
 in gold of Ophir. So shall the king desire your beauty;
 for he is your lord.

Hear, O daughter, and see; turn your ear,
 forget your people and your father's house. They are borne in with gladness and joy;
 they enter the palace of the king.

READING II 1 Corinthians 15:20–27

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

Christ has been raised from the **dead**,
 the **firstfruits** of those who have fallen **asleep**.

For since **death** came through **man**,
 the **Resurrection** of the dead came **also** through man.

For just as in **Adam** all **die**,
 so too in **Christ** shall all be brought to **life**,
 but **each** one in proper **order**:

Christ the **firstfruits**,
then, at his **coming**, those who **belong** to **Christ**;
 then comes the **end**,
 when he hands over the Kingdom to his God and **Father**,
 when he has **destroyed** every **sovereignty**
 and every **authority** and **power**.

For he must reign until he has put all his **enemies** under his **feet**.
 The **last** enemy to be destroyed is **death**,
 for “he subjected **everything** under his feet.”

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

First, Paul establishes the premise: Christ rose from the dead, the first of many to follow.

Paul utilizes progressive reasoning to make his point. Like a teacher, lead your listeners from one point to the next.

What follows the colon is an explanation of how things must progress in “proper order.”

Paul shares a profound, mystical truth. Speak slowly of this weighty subject.

All pretenders to Christ's throne will be “destroyed.” Don't shy from making full use of this strong language.

Speak the final line as if you were warning death to be on alert!

God appears to be a time and place of safety and anticipation.

Revelation was written in a specific historical context, most probably in the last decade of the first century AD. The Christians were facing persecution under Roman emperors, the dragons of Revelation. Beyond the historical context, the language and symbolism throughout Revelation has a timeless quality about it as it depicts a too-often repeated conflict between good and evil, between God's people and those opposed. Israel, Jesus, and the Church have experienced the sym-

bolic dragons. God's action for the woman and her son reveals that God is more powerful than the dragons that face God's people. The woman, mother of Jesus and mother of the Church, remains as a great sign of God's saving fidelity.

READING II Paul's exposition to the Corinthians about the Resurrection in today's reading follows his handing on to them the tradition “of first importance” that he had also received. Referred to as the *kerygma*, indicating the earliest proclamation of the good news,

Jesus' death and Resurrection stands as the most fundamental belief of the early Church. Given its central significance, Paul is dismayed that some among the Corinthian community are saying that there is no Resurrection of the dead. When they deny that those who die will not be raised, they are, according to Paul, also denying the Resurrection of Jesus, making Jesus' preaching (*kerygma*) and their faith empty and futile.

Paul's response to them is twofold: he first reaffirms Christ's own Resurrection, and then explains how his Resurrection is a