

## Reflection for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

When we are growing up, we learn how to become independent and contributing members of society, which is all well and good. We also must keep in mind the words of John Donne that 'no man is an island' and that we will need to work with others to achieve good human development. We are also affected by others and the conditions they live in and what they do. This has been illustrated by the A-level results this week, whereby young people found out that their predicted grades could be downgraded if the school they studied at has a history of poor performance. In my view this is a wake-up call for us all to help schools whenever we can, certainly to pray for them. I also hope and pray that individual students can correct injustices swiftly and get their progress in life back on track. It is also important to say that no one's value as a person is measured by exam results. Each person has a great dignity, arising from the foundation that each person is made in the image and likeness of God. The next generation is making a fantastic contribution to their families, friends, and the wider community and, I believe, this will continue. I have seen this on our annual Lourdes Pilgrimage and in our schools, and elsewhere, so I am very confident. But, we are not spiritual islands either, although at times there is a temptation to 'give up on God' and 'turn our back on the Church' when the going gets tough, going it alone is not the answer. God invites us into a relationship with him through the Church, in other words with other people. One of the things I am certain about is that heaven is not a lonely place.

In our lives of faith, we depend on God, there is no going it alone and when we turn to God, he always gets others involved. The prayer of Our Lady we find in the Gospel, the Magnificat, is prayed each day in the Evening Prayer of the Church – the Divine Office. In religious communities it is often sung, and this is true when other members of the Church come together to celebrate vespers. There is no doubt about where Our Lady stands on the issue of her need for God: '*...for the Almighty has done great things for me.*' This prayer soon broadens out to include others and reflect on the condition of the people: '*...He has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly.*' There is no forgetting about the needs of others either. Those most in need get a particular mention in this prayer. Our Lady recognises that it is God who is active in raising up those who are considered lowly. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus and we are told that she was a '*lowly servant*'. God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus and because she accepted her role and mission, her part in the salvation of the world was established and continued when her earthly pilgrimage was over. The sense of the faithful over many, many years led to an official declaration by Pope Pius XII in 1950 that Our Lady had been assumed into heaven body and soul and she is there for us when we seek her intercession.

At times, when we look around the world it is the poorest and those most hard pressed who seem to have a special devotion to Our Lady. Maybe they identify with her as a 'lowly handmaid' and as one who prays about the princes being cast from thrones and the lowly being exalted. But we are all lowly servants when it comes to playing our part in salvation history and securing a place in heaven body and soul. We cannot do it alone, we need that relationship with Jesus which Mary his mother exemplifies for us. '*Happy the womb that bore you and the breasts you sucked!* a woman in the crowd cries, but Jesus says, '*still happier those who hear the word of God and keep it!*' Listen to this feast for, '*He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy - according to the promise he made to our ancestors- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.*' God bless, Canon David