

AUGUST 15, 2025, FATHER MICHAEL COUTTS

A few years ago, a hockey athlete was receiving a whole list of awards for his skill. And when he went up to give thanks—usually they thank their teammates—but this time, he stepped back and said:

"I give the glory of all these awards—I want to share with my mother and my father. My father died when I was very young, and my mother, a single mother, raised us up making a whole lot of sacrifices. The glory of this hockey is her glory."

In the same way, Mary shares in the glory of her Son—the glory of a Mother whose Son now sits at the right hand of the Father for all eternity.

In 431, the Council of Ephesus declared that Mary was the Theotokos—the “Mother of God,” the God-bearer. Because she was the Mother of Jesus, and you couldn’t separate God and man—the two natures in one person—she was considered to be the Queen Mother, as Jesus is the King.

From the fourth century, the celebration of Our Lady being taken into heaven—body and soul—has been part of our tradition. It was only fitting that when Mary finished her earthly course, she was assumed body and soul into heaven. Just like Jesus, who died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven.

In every religion I know—Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist—even atheists, there is something called a *sacred space*. A space where we can lift up our souls to a higher power. A time for reflection, a time for quiet, a time for gratitude.

Mary indeed was a sacred space—because she gave birth to the Saviour.

As the Mother of the Church and the Mother of Jesus, she was given to us as believers at the foot of the cross, when Jesus said, “Behold your Mother.” And in that sense, she took care not only of the disciple who stood there, but of all believers through the ages.

She was indeed sacred space.

In the Litany of the Rosary, we give her many titles: “Mirror of Justice,” “Ark of the Covenant,” “Sacred Vessel,” “Vessel of Honour,” “Singular Vessel of Devotion,” “Mystical Rose.” All these great titles show us how Our Lady enjoys the glory of heaven.

But the one that strikes me most is “Ark of the Covenant.” Because when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, God could have chosen any way—but He chose a woman. She became not only the physical Mother, but the spiritual and symbolic Mother of Jesus.

God allowed the Word to become flesh and dwell among us through Mary. He chose a woman to be a part of salvation history—the same salvation that you and I enjoy today.

And if God has chosen a woman, why do we feel so strange about placing women in central roles within our Church structures? Where they can make decisions, show vision, and express their enthusiasm? Mary is a powerful example of all that.

The only problem we face as we celebrate the Assumption of Mary is that some of us tend to make Mary into a god. And Mary herself would be horrified if we tried to do that. Because she is a human being—just like you and me. She shares in the glory of God, but there must be balance.

Sometimes—not only lay people but even priests—elevate her beyond what is proper. Yes, we are part of the divine life through grace, and Mary certainly is. But she is not divine herself.

Even Elizabeth, in today's Gospel, expresses deep reverence: "Blessed are you among women. And who am I, that the mother of my Saviour should come to me?" And Mary responds humbly: "The Almighty has done great things for me."

I'd like to end on a "did-you-know" note.

Mary has been venerated not only in the Eastern rites, but especially in South America—in Colombia, in Venezuela, in Uruguay, and Paraguay. In fact, the capital of Paraguay has been named after Our Lady's Assumption: *Asunción*. They have devoted themselves to the honour and glory of Mary.

And so should we.

Holy Mary, pray for us.