

A Sermon by St. Bernard of Clairvaux on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

I share the following from the former readings for the Octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I made a relatively free translation so as not to lose any of the force of the original, which is really quite beautiful.

Sermo 4 de Assumptione B.M.V circa medium

There is nothing that pleases me more, and nothing that terrifies me more than to preach on the glory of the Virgin Mary. For, see, if I praise her virginity, I see that there are many who have offered themselves as virgins after her. If I preach on her humility, we will find, perhaps, even a few who, taught by her Son, have become meek and humble of heart. If I want to proclaim the greatness of her mercy, there are some also some very merciful men and women. There is, however, one thing in which she does not have someone like her, before or after, and that is her joining the joy of motherhood with the honor of virginity. This is Mary's privilege, and it is not given to another: it is unique, and it is also something that words cannot perfectly describe.

Nevertheless, if you pay attention closely, you will find not only this one virtue, but even other singular virtues in Mary, which she only *seems* to share with others. For can one even compare the purity of the angels to that spotless virginity which was found worthy to become the tabernacle of the Holy Spirit and dwelling place of the Son of God? How great and how precious was her humility, together with such perfect innocence, such wisdom without fault, and such a fullness of grace? How did you obtain such meekness, O Blessed Woman, such great humility? You are indeed worthy, whom the Lord considered carefully, whose beauty the King desired, on whose lap with its sweetest fragrance the eternal Father was brought to rest.

Behold, with these acts of devotion we have meditated on your ascension to your Son, and we have followed you as though from a distance, O Blessed Virgin. Let the grace of your mercy, the favor that you found with God, be made known to the world: may your prayers obtain mercy for the condemned, remedy for the sick, strength of heart for the lowly, consolation for the afflicted, aid for those in peril, and freedom for your holy ones. And on this day of celebration and gladness, may Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, through thee, O merciful Queen, pour out the gifts of His grace upon all those who invoke the sweetest name of Mary with praise, for He is the God of all things. blessed unto all ages. Amen.