

Assumption

August 15, 2021

St. Patrick

“For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting”—so her cousin Elizabeth cried out to the pregnant Mary—“As soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy!”

Ah, yes, joy can be contagious. Elizabeth and Mary—both pregnant—shared their joy with one another, as did Elizabeth’s unborn son, John the Baptist.

Joy can be contagious. Friends: This Feast of Mary entices us to catch that joy.

I caught that joy forty years ago on August 15th, celebrating Mary’s going up to heaven at the end of her earthly life, body and soul. At that time I was finishing my graduate work in Rome, living at the residence for American priests studying in Rome.

That month of August, in 1980, I spent at Montefiore, literally, “the mountain of flowers,” some forty miles from Rome. At the top of this mountain was set a centuries-old Benedictine monastery for women. For that entire month of August I served as the sisters’ “cappellano, that is, in Italian “chaplain.”

You see, at the start of that year, all of us American priests got word that during the month of August, the building where we were studying and living would be shut down. I was writing the last chapter of my dissertation and needed to get it finished in August.

Well, those Benedictine sisters needed a chaplain during that month. It worked out for them, and me. It was a lovely monastery with about twenty religious sisters. During the 1940s, Jewish refugees were hidden at this monastery, escaping from the deadly wrath of Hitler and Mussolini. At the top of the mountain, there was a magnificent view of the countryside for miles in every direction. In my “cappallano” room where I lived and studied, I opened up the double window and was stunned by the breathtaking view. I placed my desk right in front of that open window. It was an ideal setting for writing that final chapter.

Every day I celebrated Mass with the sisters, and joined them as they sung morning prayer and evening prayer. Each night I met with one of the sisters who corrected my Italian homily for the next morning.

Then came August 15th, and the mountain seemed to explode in joy. People from the surrounding area climbed the mountain, all of them bringing fresh flowers, and singing Marian songs as they arrived at the monastery church. Early that day two sisters prepared a special tomato sauce for the pasta, I seeing them stir the gravy slowly for the feast. Flowers everywhere, a jubilant Mass, and then, later that day, a fresh, delicious feast which I shared with the sisters. As dark began to usher in the night, after we sang evening prayer, the sisters invited me to join them on their back patio, which overlooked the region. As we enjoyed gelato, we watched as seven of the towns in the surrounding countryside held parades in each town, carrying the statue of Mary, and fireworks burst in the sky over each town, a triumphant toast to Mary's Feast Day on August 15th.

St. Patrick's: Joy can be contagious, as Mary and Elizabeth embraced, and the baby in her womb—John the Baptist—leaped in her womb for joy. Oh, we hear about Mary. We know that she's Jesus' mother, and our Mother within the church. But on that Feast of Mary many August 15ths ago, I experienced that all those people on Montefiore, and throughout the countryside—well, Mary was close to them. She was part of their lives. They knew her closeness in their lives.

This Feast of Mary, may we catch the joy, and experience Mary very close to us, part of our lives! As Mary burst forth in her song, **“My soul rejoices in God my Savior.”** With Mary, rejoice in her Son, our Savior! Yes, you can catch joy.

General Intercessions

August 15, 2021

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

For the universal Church, held in the loving care of Mary, our Mother; we pray to you, O Lord...

That, on this feast of Mary, the church and world may recognize women's rightful contributions to the human family; we pray to you, O Lord ...

For separated families among immigrants and refugees seeking hope from violence and poverty in their homeland—that they find support and hospitality; we pray to you, O Lord...

For those alienated from the Church, for whatever reason—that Mary's intercession may give them consolation and hope; we pray to you, O Lord ...

For the care we show in safeguarding others from the delta variant; we pray to you, O Lord...

For the ministry of Birthright, and for pregnant women in crisis, and their children after birth; we pray to you, O Lord—

For all who have died, that they might experience the embrace of God in eternity, especially Alan Stiles, Floyd Lynch, Stella Crone, and Frank Ippolito; we pray to you, O Lord—

