



P A X C H R I S T I

Dear brothers,

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary invites us to contemplate the fulfillment of God's work in a woman who lived her entire existence in faith. As we look upon Mary assumed into heaven, we can read her life from many perspectives: hope, the resurrection, the dignity of the human person called to communion with God.

This year, I wish to dwell on a simple yet decisive perspective: **entrustment**.

The history of salvation is, ultimately, a great history of entrustments. God entrusts creation to man so that he may care for it. He entrusts a promise to Abraham, a people to Moses, a land to Joshua, a mission to the prophets. When the fullness of time comes, the Father performs the most astonishing act: He entrusts His Son, the Only Begotten, to a young woman of Nazareth.

This is the first proclamation of the Gospel: God places His trust in man. It is a truth that never ceases to amaze. The Lord could have accomplished His plan by Himself; instead, He chooses to have need of the freedom of a creature. He entrusts Himself to Mary. And Mary responds with the trust of faith.

Before the angel's announcement, she does not possess all the answers. She does not know the future; she does not fully understand the mystery that is being entrusted to her. Yet she says: "*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word*" (Lk 1:38).

Trust is the heart of every entrustment. No one entrusts what is most precious to someone whom he does not consider worthy of trust. Nor can anyone receive in trust something or someone, or a project, without, in turn, trusting the one who entrusts it to him. Mary does not ask for guarantees. She entrusts herself to God because she knows that God is faithful. For this reason Elizabeth proclaims her blessed, not first of all because she has become the Mother of the Lord, but because she has believed: "*Blessed is she who believed that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled*" (Lk 1:45).

From this meeting between God's trust and Mary's trust, the salvation of the world is born.

Mary's entire life will be a continual exercise in entrustment. At Bethlehem, in exile in Egypt, in the loss and finding of Jesus in the Temple, even to Calvary, she continues to trust



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even when she does not understand. She keeps these events in her heart, without claiming to master them. Mary keeps nothing for herself. She safeguards everything, yet possesses nothing. Even the Son whom she bore does not belong to her: she receives Him from the Father and returns Him to the Father, day after day, throughout her entire life.

Even beneath the Cross everything is expressed through an entrustment. Jesus entrusts the disciple to the Mother and the Mother to the disciple: “*Woman, behold your son... Behold your mother*” (Jn 19:26–27).

Thus the Church is born: from people entrusted to one another.

Perhaps this is also a question that the mystery of the Assumption addresses today to our religious family. **What has been entrusted to us?**

The charism of Saint John Leonardi has been entrusted to us. Communities, apostolic works, young men in formation, elderly and sick confreres, peoples and diverse cultures in which the Lord has willed our Order to flourish have been entrusted to us. But, before all else, brothers have been entrusted to us.

No confrere is simply a companion in mission. Each one is a gift and a responsibility entrusted to us by the Lord. Fraternity is born when we recognize that God has entrusted us to one another.

For this reason, trust is an indispensable virtue of community life. Where trust is lacking, suspicion grows; where suspicion prevails, people become defensive, exercise control, and close themselves off. Communion is impoverished. Evangelical trust, however, is not mere naivety. It is believing that God continues to work even through the frailty of our brothers. It means choosing every day to safeguard rather than possess, to listen rather than judge, to build bridges rather than defend boundaries.

The Assumption of Mary, then, is the revelation of God’s faithfulness. She who humbly received all that the Father had entrusted to her is now received definitively into His glory.

I believe that the *Magnificat* offers us the key to understanding this mystery. In that canticle Mary never speaks of herself as the protagonist. Everything is referred back to the work of God: “*The Almighty has done great things for me*” (Lk 1:49).

Mary knows that nothing belongs to her: everything is grace, everything is gift, everything has been received. For this reason, she is able to give everything back.

The Assumption is, in a certain sense, the *Magnificat* brought to fulfillment. She who throughout her life recognized that everything came from God now returns fully to God. She presents to the Father not her own merits, but a life lived entirely as a response to His grace.



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We too, one day, shall be called to return what we have received. We shall not be asked first of all how much we have accomplished, but how we have safeguarded what has been entrusted to us; not how much we have possessed, but how much we have loved.

Let us therefore entrust our Order, our communities, and each one of our confreres to the Virgin assumed into heaven. May she, who believed, who entrusted herself, and who faithfully safeguarded all that God entrusted to her, teach us to live with the same trust, so that our own life may also become a continual *Magnificat*, ever increasing, until the day when everything will be returned to the Father.

With fraternal affection, I wish you a holy and serene Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

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p. Antonio Piccolo, OMD

Fr. Antonio Piccolo
Rector General OMD