

# THE ANNUNCIATION MADE TO MARY

*Gaude, virgo, mater Christi  
Verbum verbo concepisti  
Dum ab angelo audisti  
Ave plena gratia*

Rejoice, O Virgin, Mother of Christ:  
with a word you conceived the Word,  
when you heard from the angel,  
“Hail, full of grace.”



Today Our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him.”<sup>1</sup> Thus St. Augustine invites us to ponder the fifth of Mary’s joys. The Ascension of the Lord marks a new moment in the life of the Church, one characterized by continuity and at the same time discontinuity. Discontinuity, in that Jesus removes himself from our physical vision: “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” (Acts 1:11). Continuity, because Christ’s return to the Father means that his saving mission goes on: “He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men” (Eph 4:8). One and the same feast both commemorates the absence of Christ’s



human body from the eyes of men and inaugurates his real presence in the Church of faith and sacraments. St. Leo the Great sums up this wonderful orchestration of divine providence, assuring us that, our Redeemer having ascended into heaven, his “visible presence has passed into the sacraments.”<sup>2</sup> Mary forms the center of this ecclesial communion that bridges heaven and earth. Her joy reflects the remarkable design of God that makes her Son and Mary herself present to all generations. Hence in her “Magnificat” Mary foretells that “all ages will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48). The Church shares Mary’s blessed joy. Throughout the world, the Church finds cause for great rejoicing on account of Christ’s

return to his Father. Why? Let Louis-Marie de Montfort suggest a reason that links the Ascension to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In his *Cantique* or *Canticle*, de Montfort says that Jesus was not able to leave Mary behind on account of the love that bound them. So before his death, Christ established the Eucharist in order that after his Ascension, Mary would find consolation here below.<sup>3</sup> The saints rejoice with Christ. In fact, the saint by definition loves fully what Jesus and Mary love fully. As Christ’s physical body returns to heaven to share completely in the beatitude of his human soul, his Mystical Body on earth learns to anticipate its own heavenly beatitude. The disappearance



of Christ, though a source of initial bewilderment to the Apostles, reveals that God’s glory will display itself in you and me. “I will not leave you desolate,” Jesus promises, “I will come to you” (Jn 14:18). Indeed, it is only by withdrawing from our physical company that Christ could have made himself personally present to so many different people. We learn this truth about the nature of the Church from St. Augustine, who taught that “although [Christ] ascended alone, we also ascend, . . . because the body as a unity cannot be separated from the head.”<sup>4</sup> During the Mass on Ascension Day, the Church prays that each of her members will “follow him [Christ] into the new creation, for his ascension is our glory and our