

Today's feast of the Assumption teaches that because of the special life Mary was called to on this earth – that at the end of her life she was assumed body and soul into heaven. This is her story:

My name is Mary. And it has been some time since John and I stood at the foot of the cross watching my son die. That's when Jesus said to me: "Woman, behold your son." And to his beloved disciple: "Behold your mother." And from that hour on, John took me into his home and we have been together ever since.

This morning I got up rather early and John was already hard at work – writing his Gospel at his table. He simply looked up and smiled. He had always looked so young and the years had not aged him very much. I can understand why my Jesus had such a special place in his heart for John – with his gentle ways and his easy love for people.

I gathered my cloak around me against the cold and closed my eyes as I thought about the many years of my life. So much was beyond my understanding – and yet I continued to believe in Yahweh, my God, and to accept his will for me. Through God's grace – I had been given the courage, faith, and humility to accept myself and who I was being called to be – and what I was asked to give away ---- all this could only be a gift from God. . . How else could I have overcome my fears and said "YES" to God when the angel Gabriel came knocking at the door of my heart in Nazareth?

My precious son, Jesus, had been a wonder in my life. I did not always understand all of what he said and did – but I knew he had a special role on earth. Our hearts had been bound together in faith and in unbreakable love – those of you who are mothers understand this. . . I watched him leave home, teach, heal – and challenge the authorities.

My heart had been pierced with such sorrow when he was arrested and tortured and finally put to death. That was the day we stood at the foot of the cross. . . and from that day on – my continued faith in God has carried me through my days of grief – and then the incredible joy-filled days that came after – when Jesus walked among us – resurrected from the dead by the Father. >> That's who is with me now – but I still miss him – and my heart still yearns for him. And some days I think I hear him and his apostles coming up the walk for a bit to eat and a place to rest.

"Mother?" John said to me, as he laid a gentle hand on my shoulder. "You are so quiet these days." I smiled at him with affection. "Dearest John," I said. "My life has been long and I have so much to be grateful for. These years we have had together have been so full."

It was true. After his resurrection, Jesus spoke to us about the need to ascend to his Father. Like so many, I resisted the urge to cling to him and not let him go again. We all had to trust. . . "I will be with you always," he had said. In my heart, I knew it was true and once again had to open my life—fully-- to God's will. I watched with joy as he was taken up into the clouds.

In the years that have followed, his message and life has given hope and meaning to a growing number of followers. Many have told me of the hope they have all because of my son. And Jesus is in my life in a vivid and very real way. I feel his presence with me as I grow tired. I speak to him from my heart constantly, just as I did when he was on earth. >> I feel a strong connection that is as unexplainable as it is real. I just need to close my eyes and think of him . . .

"Mother," came the familiar, loving voice. "Blessed are you among women." Was this John's voice or my son's voice? Because it sounded so different – and yet familiar. When I turned, it was Jesus who was calling my name! "My son," I softly said – and we embraced. I felt his cheek firmly against mine.

I did not know how or why this was happening. There were no questions and no answers for this. He had promised us all we would be with him and the Father for all eternity.

I touched my body in wonder and knew I had been drawn to a different place by a power not my own. It was my same body – and yet it was different – more vibrant.

"You said 'yes' to the Father's request, mother." Jesus said to me. "Your life was prepared in a special way and you followed it with such faith. You made my work possible. So today, you will be with me in paradise."

I knew that somehow I was experiencing the resurrection – in a way others would have to wait for. As I had done so many times before – I paused – and opened my heart in prayer: "The almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his Name."