

The Woman: Take-Home 3

Session 3: The Ark of the New Covenant

What We Found

The Ark of the Covenant was the dwelling of God's presence in Israel; when the tabernacle was completed, the cloud covered it and the glory of the LORD filled it (Exodus 40:34–35). In the Greek Old Testament, the verb there is 'overshadowed' (epeskiazēn), the very word the angel uses for Mary: 'the power of the Most High will overshadow you' (Luke 1:35).

Luke tells the Visitation (Luke 1:39–56) in the shape of the Ark's journey to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6): the trip to the hill country of Judah, Elizabeth's awestruck question echoing David's, the leaping before the presence, and the three-month stay. Luke, as the Church has long read him, is showing us that Mary is what the Ark was: the place where the Lord dwells among his people (cf. CCC 2676).

The Ark's holiness was never its own; it came entirely from the Presence it carried. Everything the Church honors in Mary points beyond her to the One she carried, and what it says of her as God-bearer it says, in a lesser key, of every baptized soul: you also are now a temple of the same Presence (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE LITANY OF LORETO

Among the titles the Church has prayed for centuries in this approved litany stands Foederis Arca: Ark of the Covenant. Before it was an argument, it was a prayer.

Litany of Loreto

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN DAMASCENE

St. John Damascene teaches, in substance, that Mary is the living Ark: carrying not tablets of stone but the Lawgiver, not manna but the Bread of Life.

Homilies on the Dormition (summary)

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: THE SYRIAC TRADITION, ASSOCIATED WITH ST. EPHREM

The Syriac hymns sing of Mary as the dwelling and tabernacle of God: the small space that contained the One whom the heavens cannot contain.

Hymns of the Syriac tradition (summary)

Live It This Week

- Arrive ten minutes early to Mass or adoration once this week and pray David's question: 'How can the Lord come to me?'
- Reread Luke 1:39–56 and mark every word of joy; count them.
- Each evening, name one way the Lord took up residence in your day that you nearly missed.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the

child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God."

Luke 1:35 (RSV2CE)

Before next session: Read 1 Kings chapters 1 and 2, and pay attention to the two women in the story.

Catechism references: CCC 2676; 697