

As a little kid ... probably around the age of 3 or 4 ... my grandmother gave me a magnifying glass. I'm not sure my mom thought it was the best idea. She was probably concerned about me breaking the lens and hurting myself or one of my siblings with the shards.

For a toddler, a magnifying glass was magic. You could see all sorts of details when you held it up close to your eye. Of course, if you held it away from your eye at a certain distance, it was a view into an upside-down world.

I would walk around the house with it held out at an arm's length ... watching as it flipped everything around in that little loop.

Which of course meant that at one point in time ... I ran into a wall with it. The lens survived. The handle and the metal loop that held the lens are long gone. Later on in my childhood, it took its toll on anthills and burning my name onto leaves. I actually still have the lens stored away somewhere with childhood treasures in a closet at my folks.

Today is the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. An important holy day for a couple of reasons. One of which is that it is the patronal feast day of our diocese - the Diocese of Saginaw. It is the name of our Cathedral, and in Saginaw, Bay City, and Midland - the three bigger cities in our diocese - there is a parish church dedicated to the Assumption.

Secondly, it is one of the four Marian dogmas.

There is a misplaced idea in recent years that somehow anything related to Mary was stealing the show from Jesus.

Yet in the past two weeks, I've met with a bunch of school families. And I've yet to meet a kid who would think that if his mom were talked about in a good way that he was getting the short end of the stick.

In fact, back in the day - when life was tougher on the playground - many a fistfight was started over a comment that started or ended with "your mom."

Nonetheless, for the record, all good theology on Mary - that is, the dogmas, the teachings, the doctrine about Our Lady - all good Mariology is based on good Christology.

And, in case you were wondering, the four Marian dogmas are:

1. Mary's divine motherhood - which we celebrate on January 1
2. Mary's perpetual virginity - which we hear every time we call her the "Blessed Virgin Mary."
3. Mary's immaculate conception - which we celebrate on December 8
4. Mary's assumption, body and soul, into heaven at the end of her earthly life - which we celebrate today.

In today's Gospel, we hear one of the three "New Testament" hymns found in Luke's Gospel. They are known by the first word or words in Latin, and are a part of the daily prayer of the Church. Their English titles are based on who prayed it in Luke's Gospel.

These are:

1. The Canticle of Zechariah
2. The Canticle of Mary
3. The Canticle of Simeon.

Today's is, the Canticle of Mary, known by its first Latin word: "Magnificat."

This word means "to magnify."

And an older translation of the first words of this hymn are "My soul magnifies the Lord."

Which begs the question: what do our souls magnify?

I would guess that at times, our souls magnify our selves, maybe sometimes our souls magnify our family, sometimes our work, maybe our friends.

But if, like that magnifying lens I played with as a kid, our souls are meant to be used for amazing things. But perhaps the greatest thing we can do is to magnify God with our souls, and our hearts, and our minds.

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ - let us pray to be a lens to the world of the grace and mercy and love of God. May our souls magnify the Lord in all that we think, and say, and do.