

## **Assumption of Mary 2021**

This Doctrine of the Assumption of Mary was always believed in by the Church and attested to by the Saints. It is rooted in the Scriptures. But it was only proclaimed a dogma of the catholic Faith by Pope Pius X11 on Nov 1st 1950 before a crowd of half a million which thronged St Peter's square, Rome.

But the Assumption doesn't mean that Mary is distant from us on Earth. Even though the Angel Gabriel referred to Mary as being 'highly favoured' God didn't shield her from human suffering. If anything it was heightened by virtue of being the mother of our suffering saviour. Standing at the foot of the Cross mystically unites Mary with the passion of her Son. When the soldier literally pierced the human heart of Jesus with a lance Mary's heart was pierced at the same time with a 'sword of sorrow' fulfilling the words which the prophet Simeon spoke to Mary in the temple 'a sword of sorrow will pierce your heart'.

Mary can identify with difficulties which families go through today because of similar ones she had to face such as the uncertainties concerning the virginal conception of Jesus, being turned away from the inn at Bethlehem, The massacre of the innocents which put baby Jesus's life in mortal peril, the hazardous flight into Egypt, being rebuffed in his home village of Nazareth, losing many of his followers after declaring He was the Bread of Life and culminating in his final rejection on the Cross. All these things and much more must have been trying times for Mary but they mean that she can empathise with us and help us carry similar crosses. Like her Son, the humility of Mary meant that she always put the Will of God, howsoever difficult, before her own which was summed up in her response to the Angel Gabriel before Jesus was miraculously conceived – 'let what you have said be done to me'.

Thus St John Damascene (7<sup>th</sup> century), who is the greatest exponent of this tradition, compares the bodily Assumption of the revered Mother of God with her other gifts and privileges:

'It was right that she who had kept her virginity unimpaired through the process of giving birth should have kept her body without decay through death. It was right that she who had given her Creator, as a child, a place at her breast should be given a place in the dwelling-place of her God. It was right that the bride espoused by the Father should dwell in the heavenly bridal chamber. It was right that she who had gazed on her Son on the cross, her heart pierced at that moment by the sword of sorrow that she had escaped at his birth, should now gaze on him seated with his Father. It was right that the Mother of God should possess what belongs to her Son and to be honoured by every creature as the God's Mother and handmaid'.

As our Mother she is there to accompany us on our journey through life and lead us into a deeper union with her Son.

So, as we do with our own earthly mothers, let us call often on our Heavenly Mother so that she will keep us on the path which leads to Life without end.