

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The most Blessed Virgin Mary when the course of her earthly life was completed was taken up Body and Soul into the Glory of Heaven where she already shares the glory of Her Son's Resurrection

This Doctrine was always believed in by the Church and attested to by the Saints. It has a firm foundation 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.

Where she has gone we hope to follow. That is our destiny. In the Creed, which we recite every Sunday, we attest to this when we say the words: 'we believe in the Resurrection of the body and life everlasting'.

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 spear Mary's heart was also pierced with a 'sword of sorrow' fulfilling the words which the prophet Simeon spoke in the Temple to Mary when Jesus was a baby. One of Mary's titles is 'Mother of Sorrows'.

Mary can identify with difficulties which families go through today because of similar ones she had to face such as the uncertainties concerning the 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 is 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 – 'let what you have said be done to me'.

But humility didn't mean that Mary was easily cowed. Saint Pope Paul VI recounted in one of his encyclicals that Mary was far from being a timidly submissive woman. Being humble, like Mary, doesn't mean being cowed into submission or bullied. On the contrary she was a woman who did not hesitate to proclaim that God vindicated the humble and routed the proud of heart as we just heard in her *'Magnificat'*.

In our prayers to her she will surely give us the same courage, despite opposition, to stand up for the truth of the gospel today as she did in her lifetime.

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 glory. **END**

EXTRA NOTES

WORDS OF POPE PIUS XII ON THE OCCASION OF THE INSTITUTION OF THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION ON 1 ST NOVEMBER IN 1950
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In their sermons and speeches on the feast day of the Assumption of the Mother of God, the Holy Fathers and the

great doctors of the church were speaking of something that the faithful already knew and accepted: all they did was to bring it out into the open, to explain its meaning and substance in other terms. Above all, they made it most clear that this feast commemorated not merely the fact that the Blessed Virgin Mary did not experience bodily decay, but also her triumph over death and her heavenly glory, following the example of her only Son, Jesus Christ.

Thus St John Damascene, 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'.

Another very ancient author asserts: *'Being the most glorious Mother of Christ our saviour and our God, the giver of life and immortality, she is given life by him and shares bodily incorruptibility for all eternity with him who raised her from the grave and drew her up to him in a way that only He can understand'.*

All that the holy Fathers say refers ultimately to Scripture as a foundation, which gives us the vivid image of the great Mother of God as being closely attached to her divine Son and always sharing his lot.

It is important to remember that from the second century onwards the holy **Fathers of the Church** have been talking of the Virgin Mary as **the new Eve for the new Adam**: not equal to him, of course, but closely joined with him in the **battle against the enemy**, which ended in the triumph over sin and death that had been promised even in Paradise. The glorious resurrection of Christ is essential to this victory and its final prize, but **the Blessed Virgin's share in that fight must also have ended in the glorification of her body**. For as the Apostle says: When this mortal nature has put on immortality, then the scripture will be fulfilled that says "Death is swallowed up in victory".

So then, the great **Mother of God**, so mysteriously united to Jesus Christ from all eternity by the same decree of predestination, immaculately conceived, an **intact virgin throughout her divine motherhood**, a noble associate of our Redeemer as he defeated sin and its consequences, received, as it were, the final crowning privilege of being preserved from the corruption of the grave and, following her Son in his victory over death, was brought, body and soul, to the highest glory of heaven, to shine as Queen at the right hand of that same Son, the immortal King of Ages.