

## Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Aug 15, 2021

This Sunday, we celebrate the **Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary into heaven**. The Dogma of the Assumption was solemnly declared by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950. This was the declaration that after her life on earth was completed Mary was taken up to heaven body and soul. The belief in Assumption dates back to the early centuries of the Church. Christians always believed that Mary's death was a falling asleep in the Lord or dormition. She was immediately taken up to God. Actually the Assumption of Mary was one of the most popular themes in religious art of the medieval times. With the exception of Jesus Christ, who is the Eternal Word, conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit, **Mary is the greatest person to ever exist**. She is the greatest person to be conceived through a human mother and a human father. She is the one who was conceived without sin. She gave her life so we can have a Saviour. She is the greatest of us all. Today we celebrate a path that we're all called to walk: from here to Heaven. Mary received the grace to be body and soul in Heaven along with her son. The other just souls that have preceded us are in Heaven, but they're separated from their bodies until the Last Day when Our Lord raises everyone from the dead in the Last Judgment. **Our Lord ascended into Heaven in glory; Our Blessed Mother was assumed into Heaven.**

The First Reading (Revelation 11:19a; 12:1-6a; 10ab) the apostle John tries to express Mary's role in the Church yesterday, today, and forever. She is clad in the sun: in Revelation, the justified is simply clad in white, but Mary's brilliant clothing shows the graces she'd received from God are even more dazzling. The moon is under her feet: as the most perfect creature, the heavenly bodies are subjected to her, not the other way around. Crowned with twelve stars: the queen of the apostles and the mother of the Church in the order of grace is totally beyond the dragon's power. **The dragon can sweep the stars from heaven, but it cannot defeat the mother of God or her mission to be the mother of the Redeemer and our mother.** When the Jewish Kingdom in this world, under Saul, then David, then Solomon fell flat, they looked forward to a Kingdom of the future, but what they had in mind wasn't much different from the Kingdom they dreamt for in the here and now. Christ showed them the "Kingdom at hand," and it wasn't what they expected. It was a Kingdom only seen by faith, starting here and now in this world, and only achieving its full glory in the world to come.

In the Second Reading (1 Corinthians 15:20-27), St. Paul reminds us that Christ was the first fruits of the definitive victory over death that was to come. In the end, "[Our Lord] hands over the Kingdom to his God and Father, ... For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet ... the last enemy to be destroyed is death." The Assumption is God's reminder of that victory to come. Whether Mary died at the end of her time on earth is not clear, but the decay of death did not spoil her. Taken up body and soul into Heaven, her Son's final victory was shown in her. Through Mary's fiat, her desires for the Kingdom, which she sings for in the Magnificat, coincide perfectly with that reality to come, and she accepts it and strives for it with total faith. **Mary was no spared little flower. When the Kingdom took flesh in her womb she had Joseph to contend with, a flight to Egypt, thirty years of silence in Nazareth, three years seeing how many people did not accept her Son's message, then Calvary and her greatest commission: to be the mother of the apostles and of the whole Church. She's continuing that mission, body, and soul, from Heaven, showing us what is to come as long as we keep working and hoping.**

In the Gospel (Luke 1:39-56), Elizabeth rejoices that her cousin had come to visit, not just because she was glad to see her kin, but because Mary is aglow with accepting the

invitation to become the Mother of God. John leaps in the womb at the presence of Jesus in Mary's womb. Their missions are closely linked. Elizabeth blesses Mary because she "believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." **Mary was extraordinarily blessed because she believed in the Lord, and in the Assumption, we see that she believed in the Lord throughout her earthly life and beyond. Mary doesn't take credit. She glorifies the Lord with her canticle, and now she does so in eternity.**

Mary's Assumption reminds us of what awaits us if we accept suffering and trials with patience and faith, desiring to help Our Lord accomplish the work of redemption. From the cradle to the cross, Mary is the silent background figure in our Saviour's life. Christ, who needed her at Bethlehem, must surely have been consoled by her presence at Calvary where she shared in his crucifixion. It's important for us to remember this bigger picture. That's one of the reasons the Church celebrates the Assumption so solemnly: the Church wants our faith to be big, strong, and robust, like Mary's. It wants us to remember that God is powerful and magnificent, and that he does wonderful things in, through, and for people who really trust him, as Mary did. Two men went fishing. One man was an experienced fisherman; the other wasn't. Every time the experienced fisherman caught a big fish, he put it in his ice chest to keep it fresh. Whenever the inexperienced fisherman caught a big fish, he threw it back. The experienced fisherman watched this went on all day and finally got tired of seeing this man wasting good fish. "Why do you keep throwing back all the big fish you catch?" he asked. The inexperienced fisherman replied, "I only have a small frying pan." Sometimes, like that fisherman, we throw back the big plans, big dreams, big ideas, and big opportunities that God sends us, because our faith is too small. We laugh at that fisherman who didn't figure out that all he needed was a bigger frying pan; yet how ready are we to increase the size of our faith?

**In the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer for today's Solemnity**, the priest prays: ***"Today the virgin Mother of God was taken up into heaven to be the beginning and the pattern of the Church in its perfection, and a sign of hope and comfort for your people on their pilgrim way."*** Our lives here are full of doubts, difficulties, sufferings, and pain. Our efforts to follow Christ face obstacle after obstacle. We are traveling through life in the midst of problems, troubles, and frustration and we can't see the way out. This is life in a fallen world. Our faith in Christ doesn't take away the cross. It didn't take away the cross from Mary's life. It didn't take away the cross from the lives of the saints. But it does show us that the first Christian, the Mother of all Christians, was snatched up into heaven at the end of her earthly journey. Mary's Assumption gives us comfort and hope as we stumble through life's hardships, enabling us to persevere through our trials. Mary has so much to teach us, because she points forward to where we hope to be, showing us that loyalty to Christ and a willingness to suffer with him is rewarded by complete happiness in heaven. We are given the assurance that our God is faithful. If we stay true to him, he will be true to us. So following the pattern of Mary's life, we will share in the glory of her son.

**Today, as we receive Mary's Son again in Holy Communion, let's enjoy this comfort and this hope, and rest assured that they are not an illusion, but the everlasting truth. "Let us pray to the Holy Virgin, She who lived the most beautiful story of love with God, that she may give us the grace to open ourselves to the encounter with her Son."** (Pope Francis Angelus August 1, 2021)