

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
THE ASSUMPTION: OUR HOPE ASSURED

"Hence forth, all ages shall call me Blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me, Holy is His Name" (Lk. 1: 48, 49)

"Finally, the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death." The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians" (CCC. 966).

"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 in the glory of her Son's Resurrection, anticipating the resurrection of all members of his Body" (CCC. 974).

"The Assumption reminds us that Mary's life, like that of every Christian, is a journey of following, following Jesus, a journey that has a precise destination, a future already marked out: the definitive victory over sin and death and full communion with God" (Pope Benedict XVI).

The Assumption, A Reward for Faithfulness: above quotations from The Catechism of the Catholic Church and Pope Emeritus convey profound messages of deep insights into the celebration we have today, The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. First, Mary was preserved from the "stain of sin" by the fact of her Immaculate Conception. Her sinless nature ensured her purity, which made her a perfect mother of the Only Begotten Son of God, and co-operating with the grace of God, she lived a life free from the "stain of sin" throughout her lifetime. She was without sin. This state of sinlessness made her assumption into heaven body and soul both a possibility and a necessity. In other words, the Assumption is a reward for her faithfulness. Each of us, created in the image and likeness of God, is innately good. For, after creating us, "God saw that we are good" (cf. Gen. 1: 31). God's grace is equally sufficient for us to enable us to live the good and holy lives as Mary did (cf. 2 Cor. 12: 19).

The Assumption, A Reminder of Our Life's Journey: Benedict XVI says that the Assumption reminds us that Mary's life, like that of every Christian, is a journey of following Jesus. Mary offered a personal response to God from the moment of Annunciation when she uttered the eternal Yes to the message of the Angel Gabriel. This could be likened to our Yes on the day of our baptism. These affirmations marked the beginning of our journey on the path of redemption, a journey of following not just an earthly model but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who lived a life of complete obedience to the Will of the Father. The Christian life is a life of imitation. God, the Father, commanded the Israelites: "Be holy, for I, Your heavenly Father, I am holy" (Deut. 18: 13). God the Son reminded His disciples: "Be perfect (compassionate) as your heavenly Father is perfect (compassionate)" (Matt. 5: 48; Lk. 6: 36). God, the Holy Spirit, inspires the Apostle Peter to exhort us: "Imitate the

One who called you. As He is holy, so you, too, be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet. 1: 15). This is the challenge of every Christian, the journey that Mary embarked on and lived faithfully to the end.

The Assumption is an Assurance of Our Resurrection: Mary’s assumption reminds us that the earth is not our destination and assures us that if we live after the example of our Blessed Mother, we too shall be rewarded with a share in the fullness of God’s glory. As St. Paul says in the Second Reading (1 Cor. 15: 20-26): “Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ.” Mary, as the Mother, who experienced all our human weaknesses, accompanies us on our journey, especially at those times when the cloud of violence and conflict seems to overwhelm us; when we struggle to liberate our minds from the impurities of the flesh; when life’s turbulence threatens to dislodge us; when faced with the needs of love, shelter, and security. Mary follows our steps with tenderness; comforts us with her words of courage and, reassures us with maternal care. The story of the Visitation to Elizabeth in the Gospel (Lk. 39-56) is an affirmation of Mary’s earnest desire to journey with us down the line. Hers is to fulfil the will of the Son for us: “That you may be where I am” (Jn. 14: 13; 17: 24).

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary as a Dogma of the Church: We have to say that this celebration was dogmatically defined on 1st November 1950 by Pope Pius XII in the Dogmatic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*. Defining this dogma as revealed truth, the great Saint Pope Pius XII wrote: “We pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory” (MD. 44). This is the teaching of the Church that we celebrate today. In the light of this, the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council states: “the immaculate Virgin preserved free from all stain of original sin, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things” (no. 59). She is the Queen of Heaven and Earth. This is what we teach. This is what we believe. This is what we practice. For those who do not believe, this is a controversy; but for us, this is true teaching that encourages and challenges us to aspire to live a life of obedience and total surrender to the will of God in our lives as our Blessed Mother did. For just as our Blessed was rewarded with the glory of heaven, so too shall we all be rewarded after our earthly life is over. This is the hope of all the baptised that “we may merit to be sharers of her glory.”

My dear friends, as we celebrate this great solemnity of the Church, let our minds turn to the mystery of the dragon with whom the woman struggles in the First Reading (Rev. 11: 19; 12: 1-6, 10) for this is the sign of our constant struggle against the evil one. Let the victory of the woman and the survival of her child be reminders to us that in the battles of life, we shall always win if we are united with God as our Blessed Mother was. And in the end, we shall join our Blessed Mother, with the Saints and Angels in singing the eternal Magnificat. Through the intercession of Mary, our Mother, may we also enjoy the joy of the Kingdom prepared for us before the foundation of the world (Matt. 25: 34).