

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
(J.F.M.H. – 1.8,2019)

The Feast of the Assumption of Our Blessed Lady, on August 15th is a Holiday of Obligation. It is celebrated all over the world in many different ways. In France, noisy parties are held in hundreds of villages on that day. No doubt, the intention of some of the Catholics and non Catholics who go to them is just to have a good time, but the reason the parties happen at all, is the spiritual one of honouring Our Lady, and, therefore, honouring her Son Jesus Christ. In England, once known as Our Lady's Dowry, we have lost much of our childlike love, and such parties on the Feast of the Assumption are seldom seen. On this coming feast of the Assumption let's rejoice in such a way that Our Heavenly Mother can see that those living in her Dowry, still honour her Son. Although her Assumption was believed by the Church from a very early date, and the feast was celebrated by both the Eastern and Western Churches before the 15th Century, it was only made a Dogma by Pope Pius XII during the "Holy Year" of 1950. To define it, he used the words, ***"By the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, 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 cause of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory."***

One of the things that is left unanswered, was the question, did Our Lady die? The Catechism of the Catholic Church doesn't attempt to enlighten us on this point, but quotes from the Byzantine Liturgy for the 15 August, the Feast of the Dormition (Dormition means Sleeping); ***"In giving birth you kept your virginity; in your Dormition you did not leave the world, O Mother of God, but were joined to the source of Life. You conceived the living God and by your prayers, will deliver our souls from death."*** (C. of the C.C. 996) Most theologians including our present Pope Francis, and indeed most Christians, have thought that, like her Son, she did die. This belief was also held by Cardinal John Henry Newman, who when writing about the death of Our lady said, ***"And therefore she died in private. It became Him, who died for the world, to die in the world's sight; it became the Great Sacrifice to be lifted up on high, as a light that could not be hid. But she, the Lily of Eden, who had always dwelt out of the sight of man, fittingly did she die in the garden's shade, and amid the sweet flowers in which she lived. Her departure made no noise in the world - but at length the rumour spread abroad that the mother of God was no longer on earth."***

There is something that rings true about the Cardinal pointing to the hidden life of Our Lady. She was no rival to God The Son, she was His creature, the handmaid of the Lord. All her titles are a reflection of the Glory of her Son, and this one of ***"Our Lady Assumed into Heaven"***, is no less so than the rest. In it, she is the perfect example for us all. What ever we achieve, we achieve with and through God's help. The honour belongs to God. In His love for us He has given us a way of being associated with that reparation, in the way that members of a body are associated with the actions of the head. However, let's not imagine that without Christ our Head, the body would somehow act on its own. Bodies without heads have no life, and without this particular head wouldn't even exist. Nearly everyone at some time in their life receives praise or honour of some sort. This is surely a time to remember how Our Lady, understanding that all generations would call her blessed, provided both her cousin, St. Elizabeth and us, with the explanation ***"for He that is Mighty has done great things in me and holy is His name."*** She knew where the honour lay, and was very quick to give it. The same reason is the explanation of her Assumption; He that is Mighty had indeed done great things in her. We have to look at our own lives with the eyes of Mary, and as Pope John Paul II put it, ***"What He did in her, He did for us, therefore, did it as in us."*** It forms part of the victory over death, the beginning of which can be found in the Resurrection of her Son Jesus Christ. The Assumption of Mary into heaven prefigures and embodies what the Church is, and what will happen to the Church. It is a sign that it is not Jesus alone who rises from the dead, but all faithful Christians, too. God in His wisdom has chosen that the complete fruits of His victory over death would not be given to us immediately, but would wait until the final judgement. In our world of materialism and corruption, the Assumption reminds us that the true, honourable destiny of both our souls **and** our bodies is heaven.

Now we can look into why it is so important. There are 4 reasons, which are all very closely linked. Firstly, as Vatican II and the New Catechism make clear, Mary prefigures and embodies what the Church is, and what will happen to the Church. So her Assumption is an extra sign that it is not Jesus alone who rises from the dead, but all faithful Christians, too. Secondly, because Mary is body and soul in heaven, she has a special place and role in our salvation. She is our Mother in the order of grace. That is why we must all form a conscious and loving relationship with her. Thirdly, as Pius IX pointed out, in our world of materialism and corruption, the Assumption gives us a very clear reminder of the true, honourable destiny of our bodies in heaven. Lastly, St. Bernadine of Siena, writing in the 15C. said that it is reasonable and fitting that not only the soul and body of a man, but also the soul and body of a woman should obtain heavenly glory: we must remember God's plan in creating the sexes encompasses the meaning of our salvation. So we can see that Mary's Assumption is a very important truth for all Christians to witness.

Our Lady Assumed into HeavenPray for us.