

## **The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

The focus of Mary's assumption into heaven is not on her as one unique member of the human race. The emphasis is on the full fruition of the graces of Christ's resurrection offered to the whole human race embodied in Mary. Mary, in other words, stands for all of us.

In Mary's assumption into heaven we see the richness of God's mercy and the promise of life everlasting.

**Apocalypse 11:19; 12:1-6. 10** Mary is the archetypal disciple in whom we see, as in a mirror, everything that we can become through God's grace, despite our human weakness. The book of the Apocalypse links us to the woman who, through the birth of her son, is instrumental in crushing the power of evil.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-26** Orthodox icons of the Dormition of Mary tell of the belief that at her death Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven as a foretaste of the resurrection. They express the hope that all human experience is destined for glory through the saving power of Jesus.

**Luke 1:39-56** As an unmarried woman, Mary had no status in Israel. As an unmarried mother she risked public shame and death by stoning. She had nothing, yet she believed that God's power could make of her a blessing for all the world.



**SOLEMNITY OF  
THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN**

**"He has thrown rulers down from their thrones but lifted up the lowly".**

When Mary visited her relation Elizabeth, the infant John , leapt for joy in his

mother's womb at the divine presence within Mary's womb. Similarly, King David danced in jubilation before the presence of God when he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Elizabeth was overwhelmed with joy that Mary, the mother of her Lord, should come to her. She proclaimed that Mary was "blessed among women" for trusting that the Lord's promises to her would be fulfilled. In an exultant hymn of praise, Mary rejoiced in the saving promises of her Mighty God. Through Mary's son, the meek and poor would be exalted, and the proud and powerful would be cast down. Mary recognized her own lowliness before God. She was *God's humble handmaid*, obedient to the Lord's command.

It is our hope as Christians that one day we will be raised by God to join Mary and her son in heaven.

### ***DOGMA OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.***

*The Feast of the Assumption of Mary is a centuries-old tradition in the Church. The Dogma of the Assumption was officially defined by Pope Pius XII in 1950 who declared that Mary was "full of grace" (Lk1:28) from the time of her conception, and was thus preserved from the consequences of sin and corruption after death (Munificentissimus Deus).*

*As an infallible pronouncement, the Dogma of the Assumption is thus a mandatory belief for all Catholics.*

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that*

*"The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians" [# 966].*

*The Feast of the Assumption is commemorated on August 15 as a holy day of obligation.*

*Everything we affirm about Mary, we affirm for the sake of her Son.  
Every grace we ascribe to Mary, we ascribe as coming from her Son.  
Every privilege we acknowledge in Mary, we acknowledge as granted by her Son.*

*Exalting the Mother does not diminish the Son in any way --- any more than the moon detracts from the sun by reflecting its light. Rather, the moon reflects the light of the sun and magnifies its radiant glory."*





## Reflection

A teacher asked the class. Why is August 15, when Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was taken up into Heaven, called the feast of the Assumption.

One bright youngster's hand shot up: "Well," he said, thinking commendably quickly. "Since Mary disappeared and we don't know what exactly happened to her we just assume she was taken up to Heaven."

Our Gospel today ends with the simple statement that, after staying with Elizabeth for three months, Mary "then went back home", back to ordinary daily life. It may seem incredible that a life that was for the most part so ordinary and uneventful should end in the glory of the Assumption. But today's gospel reminds us of a greater story of Mary as Mother.

Mary experienced **the joy** of the mother who finds pulsating within her the Creator's gift of life: 'And the Word became flesh . . . & Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry & said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, & blessed is the fruit of your womb. & Mary said: ' My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord & my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.'

Mary experienced **the pain** of the mother who is homeless: 'There was no place for them in the inn'.

Mary experienced **the distress** of the mother who has to flee her country: 'Get up, take the child & his mother with you, & escape into Egypt & stay there until I tell you.'

Mary experienced **the panic** of the mother whose child has gone missing: 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father & I have been, looking for you.'

Mary experienced **the bewilderment** of the mother who cannot fathom her growing son: 'They (Joseph & Mary) did not understand what he meant.'

Mary experienced **the assurance** of the mother who knows the mind of her child better than others do: 'His mother said to the servants (at Cana), "Do whatever he tells you."

Mary experienced **the loneliness** of the mother whose son must leave home: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth to Galilee . . . (He) was about thirty years old when he began his work"

**Mary** experienced **the sadness** of mother whose son seems to be distancing himself from her: ‘His mother & his brothers came looking for him, but they could not get to him because of the crowd. He was told, “Your mother & brothers are standing outside & want to see you.” But he said in answer, “My mother & my brothers are those who hear the word of God & put it into practice.”’

**Mary** experienced **the hurt** of the mother who witnesses her son being ridiculed: ‘People were saying, “He is out of his mind.”’

**Mary** experienced **the torture** of the mother who watches her son being tortured: ‘Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother.’

**Mary** experienced **the prayerful calm** of the Christian mother who knows that the sufferings of this world cannot be compared with the glory which is to come: ‘As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, & a cloud took him from their sight. . . . then they, returned to Jerusalem ... & with one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus.’

At her Assumption, then, Mary is indeed for us “a great sign... in heaven”.

A sign of hope that the ordinary toil of daily life has eternal consequences.

A sign of hope that Mary’s fondest wish is that we, her children, should be with her.

A sign of hope that, as she is now, so we also shall one day be.

Only response on this great mid-summer feast is that of the poet.

Patrick O’Connor wrote a poem, ‘Our Lady of the Evening.’

I have seen the sky in the evening,

It was luminous and serene,

And I loved it for its beauty,

And I thought of you, my Queen.

Pope Benedict finished his first encyclical ‘Deus Caritas Est’ (God is Love) with a lovely prayer:

Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
you have given the world its true light,  
Jesus, your Son – the Son of God.



You abandoned yourself completely  
to God's call  
and thus became a wellspring  
of the goodness, which flows forth from him.

Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.  
Teach us to know & love him,  
so that we too can become  
capable of true love  
and be fountains of living water  
in the midst of a thirsting world.

### GOSPEL WORDSEARCH

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