

## Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Rev 11:19; 12:1-6, 10

1 Cor 15:20-27

Lk 1:39-56

Today we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a feast that is linked to her Immaculate Conception. The doctrine of her conception teaches us that she was born in the normal way but was not tainted by Original Sin, so being full of grace as the Angel Gabriel described her at the Annunciation. Because of this it is believed that that she was assumed into heaven, but this must not be confused with ascending into heaven.

The word 'assumption' means being 'taken up,' which is an act of God. The word 'ascension' describes the action of the one who ascends. The Creed says that Jesus ascended into heaven. Mary's body and soul were assumed into heaven at the end of her life. Although this feast was only stated to be part of Catholic belief in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, it has been believed by the Church's faithful from the earliest times and artists were painting pictures of Mary's assumption from at least the 15th century.

The belief that it was possible to be assumed directly into heaven was already present in Judaism. Scripture tells us that Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind and the Epistle to the Hebrews says that, "by faith Enoch was taken up so that he would not see death." It was also believed that Moses was assumed into heaven because no-one knows the location of his grave. I must say that I have heard many grieving people who do not believe in Our Lady's assumption, firmly state that their dear departed relative has gone straight there!

Our Lady's presence in heaven is a recognition of her role in God's plan of salvation. Without her trust in and obedience to God's will, our salvation would not have occurred in the way it has. We need to remember though, that the heaven we are talking about is not a happy-clappy place above the bright blue sky with streets paved with gold and harpists giving free concerts during afternoon tea. Heaven is not a place but a new set of relationships, especially with God. Hell is the rejection of a relationship with God, a deliberate act of separation from Him.

In St John's Gospel Jesus promises His disciples that, "Where I am, there you will be also" (Jn 14:13). He also prayed that those whom God has given to Him may behold His glory (Jn 17:22-24). We are created in God's image so that through responding to His love for us, we may enjoy a relationship with Him both now and beyond our death, in the glory of our resurrection body that Jesus revealed to us.

Our Lady is the mother of Jesus who at His death handed her over to the care of St John and His faithful Church. The heavenly relationship between Jesus and His mother is one in which we can also share. Her obedience to God and her love for His Son is a role model for us, her fellow human beings, and this feast gives us hope that we too will share the glory that Jesus prays we might possess.

*Aug 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025*