

## THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BVM

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

1Cor 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 normally but not tainted by Original Sin due to her being in a right relationship with God and so full of grace. Because of this it is believed that that she was assumed – taken into heaven.

Being assumed into heaven 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 was 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 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The belief that it was possible to be assumed directly into heaven was 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 Scripture does not record his return from seeing, but not entering, the Promised Land and no-one knows of his grave. I must say that I have heard many grieving people who do not believe Our Lady was assumed into heaven, firmly state that their dear departed relative has gone straight there!

The assumption of Our Lady 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.

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 who 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 his glory 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. The heavenly relationship between Jesus and his mother is one in which we can also share. Her obedience to God and 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

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Aug 2021