

THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

This week the Church celebrated the great feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We commemorate the moment when Mary, having experienced bodily death, was raised to new life and was carried 'body and soul' into the glory of Heaven.

This is a wondrous moment on which to mediate. A moment that has been the inspiration for many of our greatest artists.

Beautiful though this moment undoubtedly must have been, what, we might ask, does it mean for the rest of us? How is our destiny, our own personal story, and that of our Church, encapsulated in this climactic moment in the life of the Blessed Virgin?

The answer to this question lies in what the 'Assumption' tells us about Jesus. As always Mary points us toward her Son. The Assumption of Mary reveals the true power of Jesus' selfless sacrifice. His sacrifice crushed the power that death had over us so completely, that the grave would no longer be the final destination for our bodies. For all who truly believe in Jesus, the 'Assumption' reveals that, in the fullness of time, our souls will be reunited with our resurrected bodies.

In Mary's 'Assumption' we see fulfilled the promise made to those who truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

"... Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died... for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:20-22)

In the apostolic constitution in which the teaching on the Assumption of Mary was defined, Pope Pius XII stated, " Finally it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective" (Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950)

Some mistakenly believe that we go too far in our attestations about Mary. They argue that we make a Goddess out of Mary. This of course is not true. We do not profess that Mary entered Heaven in the same manner as Jesus. Jesus, who is God and Man, 'Ascended' into Heaven. He

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did so by his own divine power, as the Son of God. Mary, a lowly human being, could not enter Heaven by her own power. Mary was 'Assumed', carried into heaven by the power of God's grace. This grace had been won for us through the life, death and resurrection of her son, Jesus Christ.

What we acknowledge, in our celebration of this great feast, is that Mary is the first among all of God's children. That Mary into paradise, body and soul, and that where she is now, we too will be.