

The Assumption of Mary and Her Coronation as Queen of Heaven and Earth

Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, # 966.)

Since the doctrine of Mary's **Assumption** is not contained *explicitly* in the Sacred Scriptures, how did this doctrine come to be defined as a dogma of our Faith?

On May 1, 1946, **Pope Pius XII** issued his encyclical, *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, to all Catholic bishops asking their opinion on defining the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A request for this definition had already been made at the first Vatican Council in 1869-1870, and was repeated throughout the years. Led by the Holy Spirit and the wisdom in the writings of patristic fathers and scholastic theologians, the bishops universally agreed with the Pope that this doctrine, already believed and venerated within the Church for centuries and *implicitly* contained in the Sacred Writings as its ultimate foundation, should be defined as a **dogma** (an infallible teaching of the Church, obligatory to the Faith of the people). Thus, on November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII issued his Apostolic Constitution, *Munificentissimus Deus*, declaring the Assumption of Mary "**body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly life**" a dogma of our Faith.

The Pope carefully avoided the word "**death**" and stated instead, "**at the completion of her earthly life.**" Why? Over the years the Church has seen great debate on whether or not Mary actually died. Eastern Orthodox religions speak of the "**dormition**" (falling asleep) of Mary. While Scripture speaks of Elijah being taken up to heaven, it does not state whether that means he did not die. If anyone should be taken up to heaven without dying, surely it would be Mary who is greater than all other creatures because of her sinlessness and her most exalted vocation as the Immaculate Mother of God. Some argue that neither Mary nor anyone else should be exempt from death if Jesus was not. The more praiseworthy belief is that Mary, one with Christ in life, in utmost humility would likewise desire to be one with Christ in the death He freely took on as the penalty for **our** sins, for she was called to be co-redeemer with the Redeemer, perfect model of the "Suffering Servant of Yahweh," the new Eve with the new Adam in the New Covenant for mankind's salvation. One can only imagine how Mary, while making **THE** Way of the Cross with Jesus, must have longed to die with Him. Since the Church Fathers are not clear on whether Mary was assumed into heaven while still alive or assumed after she had died, both views are permitted under the infallible definition of Pope Pius XII without minimalizing the truth that **Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul**, without waiting until the end of time to share in Christ's Resurrection and glory as the rest of humanity must.

Pope Pius XII explains the relationship of the dogma of Mary's **Immaculate Conception**, defined December 8, 1854 by Pope Pius IX in his encyclical *Ineffabilis Deus*, to that of the dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven which he defined.

For these two privileges are most closely related to each other. Christ has overcome sin and death by His own death; and one who is reborn in a heavenly way through baptism has, through Christ Himself, conquered sin and death. However, in accord with His general rule, God does not wish to grant the full effect of victory over death to the just until the end of time shall have come.... Yet God wished that the Blessed Virgin Mary be exempt from this general law. For she, by a completely singular privilege, conquered sin in her Immaculate Conception, and thus was not liable to that law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, nor did she have to wait for the end of time for the redemption of her body.

For the likeness of the Mother of God and the Divine Son in regard to nobility of soul and body--a likeness which forbids the very thought that the heavenly Queen should be separated from the heavenly King--absolutely demands that Mary 'must not be anywhere but where Christ is.' And furthermore, 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 have already attained heavenly glory. Finally, since the Church has never sought for bodily relics of the Blessed Virgin, nor exposed them for the veneration of the faithful, we have an argument which can be considered as 'practically a proof by sensory experience'. (Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, November 1, 1950, Paragraphs 4,5, 33.)

While **private revelations** do not carry the authority and obligation of **Divine Revelation**, when they are not contrary to faith and morals and the Church has not spoken out against them, we should treasure them as additional gifts from heaven to increase our devotion and understanding of the great mysteries of our salvation. Blessed Anne Catherine Emmerich, an Augustinian nun, stigmatist and ecstatic who lived in Germany from 1774–1824 and was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2004, based on the holiness of her life, gives us a splendid biography on the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary based on her visions from Our Lady. She refers to **Mary's death-- after an agony of longing.**

A short time before the Blessed Virgin's death, as she felt the approach of her reunion with her God, her Son, and her Redeemer, she prayed that there might be fulfilled what Jesus had promised to her in the house of Lazarus at Bethany on the day before His Ascension. ... When she begged Him that she might not live for long in this vale of tears after He had ascended, Jesus told her in general what spiritual works she was to accomplish before her end on earth. He told her, too, ... the Apostles and several disciples would be present at her death, and what she was to say to them and how she was to bless them.

After the Blessed Virgin had prayed that the Apostles should come to her, I saw the call going forth to them in many different parts of the world. ... I saw all, the farthest as well as the nearest, being summoned by visions to come to the Blessed Virgin. The indescribably long journeys made by the Apostles were not accomplished without miraculous assistance from the Lord. ...[Blessed Anne Catherine describes the Roman numerals she sees in her visions.] ... Then I see X and III and then two full moons as they are shown in the calendar, that means that the Blessed Virgin died thirteen years and two months after Christ's Ascension into Heaven. (Anne Catherine Emmerich, *The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Templegate, Springfield, IL, Pgs. 363-368.)

Blessed Anne Catherine's book tells how Mary had set up stones at the back of her home to mark each of the stations of the cross, a *Via Dolorosa* she relived daily in the solitude of her life in Ephesus. At the end of the stations was a cave in which she was to be buried. As the apostles arrived, Mary summoned each to her bedside and blessed them as Jesus had said. Then Peter celebrated the Eucharist in the outer room, after which he gave Mary Extreme Unction and Holy Communion. **Blessed Anne Catherine describes the separation of Mary's soul from her body.**

Afterwards I saw the Apostles and disciples once more standing round the Blessed Virgin's bed and praying. Mary's face was radiant with smiles as in her youth. Her eyes were raised towards heaven in holy joy. Then I saw a wonderfully moving vision. The ceiling of Our Lady's room disappeared, the lamp hung in the open air, and I saw through the sky into the heavenly Jerusalem. Two radiant clouds of light sank down, out of which appeared the faces of many angels. Between these clouds a path of light poured down upon Mary, and I saw a shining mountain leading up from her into the heavenly Jerusalem. She stretched out her arms towards it in infinite longing, and I saw her body, all wrapped up, rise so high above her couch that one could see right under it. ... I saw her soul leave her body like a little figure of infinitely pure light, soaring with outstretched arms up the shining mountain to heaven. The two angel-choirs in the clouds met beneath her soul and separated it from her holy body, which in the moment of separation sank back on the couch with arms crossed on the breast. My gaze followed her soul and saw it enter the heavenly Jerusalem by that shining path and go up to the throne of the most Holy Trinity. I saw many souls coming forward to meet her in joy and reverence; amongst them I recognized many patriarchs, as well as Joachim, Anna, Joseph, Elisabeth, Zacharias, and John the Baptist. The Blessed Virgin soared through them all to the Throne of God and of her Son, whose wounds shone with a light transcending even the light irradiating His whole Presence. He received her with His Divine Love, and placed in her hands a scepter with a gesture towards the earth as though indicating the power which He gave her. (Emmerich, Pg. 371.)

Then Blessed Anne Catherine turned her gaze back to Mary's body on the bed around which the apostles and women and disciples were still kneeling in prayer. **She describes Our Lady's death as at the ninth hour, the same as Our Lord's**, and tells how the women bathed Mary's body and prepared it for burial, much like Mary and the holy women had done with the body of Jesus. Some locks of Mary's hair were cut to be kept in remembrance. So reverently the apostles then carried Mary's body along her self-made Way of the Cross to her final resting place in the cave at the end of that sorrowful path. When all had departed from the tomb, a great light shone all around it. **Blessed Anne Catherine then describes Mary's glorious assumption into heaven.**

A broad shaft of light came down from heaven to the rock, and I saw descending in it a triple-ringed glory of angels and spirits surrounding the appearance of Our Lord and of the shining soul of Mary. The appearance of Our Lord, whose wound-marks were streaming with light, moved down in front of

her soul. Round the soul of Mary, in the innermost circle of the glory, I saw only little figures of children; in the midmost circle they appeared as six-year old children; and in the outer-most circle as grown-up youths. I could see only the faces clearly, all the rest I saw as shimmering figures of light. As this vision, becoming ever clearer, streamed down upon the rock, I saw a shining path opened and leading up to the heavenly Jerusalem. Then I saw the soul of the Blessed Virgin, which had been following the appearance of Our Lord, pass in front of Him and float down into the tomb. Soon afterwards I saw her soul, united to her transfigured body, rising out of the tomb far brighter and clearer, and ascending into the heavenly Jerusalem with Our Lord and with the whole glory. Thereupon all the radiance faded again, and the quiet starry sky covered the land. (Emmerich, Pg. 377.)

According to Blessed Anne Catherine, Thomas arrived late from India, after Mary's death and burial. Weeping bitterly and insisting on seeing Mary one last time, he walked her Way of the Cross with the other apostles to Mary's tomb. **Upon entering it they discovered the burial cloths but no body.** While her word is not official, Blessed Anne Catherine does speak of the separation of Mary's soul from her body, with the body being reunited to her soul and assumed into heaven very shortly after death to share in Jesus' Resurrection. Interestingly, Thomas was absent for Mary's death and burial just as he was absent when the Resurrected Christ first appeared to the scared apostles in the Cenacle Room. But, just as Thomas confirmed belief in Christ's Resurrection by putting his fingers into Jesus' Sacred Wounds and proclaiming it is He, so now Thomas gives testimony at Mary's tomb that her body is gone and has been assumed up to heaven to be with the glorified Christ. **The doubting Thomas we so often poke fun at has become the enduring witness of Faith to the Resurrection of Jesus and to Mary's Assumption.**

The apostles gathered Mary's burial cloths and revered them as they prayed together before each must return to his mission. **How they must have remembered having done these same things after Jesus' Resurrection.** Some have suggested that the early writers of Sacred Scripture did not include these events concerning Mary out of respect for her hidden life and her desired solitude, and because these things were simply the expected result of her extraordinarily holy life spent in such deep communion with her Son, something so clearly understood by them that they wished to preserve its mystery, too great for words, in silent awe. Never has the Church sought Mary's body, for it has never doubted that Mary's body was reunited with her soul and taken up to heaven.

Blessed Anne tells of Our Lord receiving Mary in her resurrected glory with great love, handing her **"a scepter with a gesture towards the earth as though indicating the power which He gave her."** She had shared His redemptive mission so intimately on earth as co-redeemer and would now share His triumphant reign as King of heaven and earth. Thus is she crowned Queen of heaven and earth. Having given her to us as our mother on Calvary when He gave her to John, representative of us all, so Christ now gives her to us as our Queen. Mary is the perfection of the Queen-Mother of Hebrew understanding who reigned alongside her King-Son, sharing in His reign on behalf of the people, whose every

wish was the King's command. The message of Our Lady of America® to Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil addresses this role.

I am the Mother of the sacred humanity, and it is my special work as co-redemptrix of the human race to help souls reach the sanctity of the Father in eternal union by showing them how to put on Christ, to imbibe His Spirit, and thus become one with Him.

(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, Diary, *Our Lady of America*®, Fostoria, OH, Pg. 24.)

There are those who proclaim that **Our Lady is always more Mother than Queen.** In this small 48 page Diary of messages to Sister Mildred, Our Lady is referenced 21 times as "Mother." Sister Mildred is addressed more than 30 times in such endearing terms from a mother as "my child," "my small one," "my beloved daughter." Over 35 times Our Lady speaks of "**her children,**" and many of those times referring in particular to "**her children in America.**" How can we not listen to such a Mother? Yet she pleads with us because **we are NOT listening to her and to her call for "reform of life," by which she means "sanctification from within," living in that sanctifying grace that is the Divine Indwelling Presence of the Most Holy Trinity.**

In the evening of August 5, [1957] the feast of Our Lady of the Snow, as I knelt in my room, Our Lady spoke to me about the Divine Indwelling. It was her life and she lived it perfectly, always conscious of His presence, never forgetting that all her greatness came from within, from Him Who dwelt there, working, loving, and doing good through her. This is what Our Lady means when she speaks of reformation, renewal. It is this about which she is so concerned, namely, sanctification from within, (Diary, Pg. 18.) ... You must make my people understand that the life of God within them is the source of their peace and happiness. There is no other way. (Diary, Pg. 37.)

Prayer to the Indwelling Most Holy Trinity

O my Love, my only Good, Most Holy Trinity, I adore You, hidden in the depths of my soul. To You, to Your honor and glory, I dedicate my life. May every thought, word and deed of mine be an act of adoration and praise directed towards Your Divine Majesty enthroned in my heart.

O Father, Infinite Goodness, behold Your child, clothed in the likeness of Your Son. Extend to me Your arms that I may belong to You forever.

O Son, Divine Lord, made man, crucify me with Yourself that I may become, in union with You, a sacrifice of praise for the glory of Your Father.

O Holy Spirit, Fire of Everlasting Love, consume me on the altar of Divine Charity, that at the end of life, nothing may remain but that which bears the likeness of Christ.

O Blessed Trinity, worthy of all adoration, I wish to remain in spirit on my knees, to acknowledge forever Your reign in me and over me, to Your everlasting glory.

Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the pure heart of St. Joseph, I consecrate my life to Your adoration and glory.

At the moment of death, receive me, O my Triune Love, that I may continue my adoration of love through all eternity. Amen. (200 days)

Nihil Obstat: Daniel Pilarczyk, S.T.D.

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