

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

### **August 15, 2021**

Each of us has a longing for Heaven. We experience it every time we see a beautiful sunset or spend time with friends and say to ourselves, "I wish I could just stay here forever." We experience it whenever we suffer and realize that there must be something better than this life. It is a state of happiness that will never end. There is something better than this life waiting for us who believe. Eternal union in God in Heaven is what our hearts yearn for.

So, it is natural for us to wonder what Heaven is like. What will we see when we approach the gates of Paradise and are greeted by Jesus, the saints and the angels? What will our bodies be like when they are raised from the dead and freed from the corruption of sin? What will it feel like to finally be liberated from pain, fear and sorrow?

Besides Jesus, there is someone who already enjoys that perfect state of joy in Heaven which we someday hope to reach. There is someone who already enjoys that union with God that our hearts long for. That person is the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was the first to believe in Jesus. When the angel Gabriel announced to her God's plan that she would conceive the Son of God in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit, she gave herself totally to his will. As her cousin Elizabeth proclaims, "Blessed is she who believed that God's word to her would be fulfilled!" In fact, God had been preparing Mary for her role as mother of the Savior from the moment of her conception when He preserved her from original sin. By the grace of God, she remained holy and innocent, just as Jesus was sinless.

Mary's role in God's plan of salvation did not end with the birth of Jesus. She shared in his suffering by walking the way of the cross alongside Him. She wept at His crucifixion as she saw her son treated so savagely. It was there, at the foot of the cross, that Jesus gave her to us to be our mother when He said to John, "Behold your mother." And she held His lifeless body in her arms before He was taken away to be buried. Finally, she rejoiced at the news that He had risen from the dead and, together with the apostles, she received the Holy Spirit which descended on them as tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost.

Because of Mary's unique place in God's plan of salvation, she remained free from sin. Because she was the first to believe the good news, God would not allow her body to decay in the ground. Just as He kept her soul free from the corruption of sin, so He would preserve her body from the ravages of death. On this day, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we celebrate the truth of our faith that Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven. Just as she shared in Jesus' suffering, so she would share in His resurrection.

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The Blessed Virgin Mary is a source of hope and inspiration for us. We call her “blessed” because she believed. We call her the “Mother of God” and our mother because she gave herself totally and without reserve to God’s plan even when it involved sacrifice and suffering. If we, like her, believe and give ourselves over to God’s plan for us, we too can hope to be welcomed into heaven. If we are willing to share in Jesus’ suffering by denying ourselves, avoiding sin and putting the needs of others before our own, we can look forward to also sharing in Jesus’ resurrection. Like Jesus and Mary, our bodies will one day be raised from death and glorified. Our bodies will be raised from the earth and reunited with our souls when Jesus Christ comes again. For this reason, we keep our bodies pure and undefiled by sin through God’s grace knowing that they will one day be taken up into heaven to share in the joy of the angels and saints.

And so today we commemorate not only what God has done for Mary. We also celebrate what God has in store for each of us who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. God created us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. He has conquered sin and death and has prepared a place for us in his Kingdom. Mary is the first to receive these blessings. They will one day be ours as well if we hold fast to our faith in Jesus.

The Blessed Virgin Mary - the Mother of God and our mother - is standing now before the throne of God, her body and soul forever free from the corruption of sin and death. Her role in God’s plan now is to pray for us and bring our needs to her Son. As the Queen of Heaven, she prays constantly for us. We can bring our needs to her with confidence that she will in turn bring them to Jesus. We can also be confident that she will pray for us at the hour of our death so that we may be welcomed into our heavenly homeland and finally know the joy of eternal life, beholding the face of God together with Mary, our mother.