

Assumpta Est Maria

The Assumption of Mary

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The drama of creation reached its climax when God fashioned man. All the rest of creation was subjected to him. "Let us make man to Our own image and likeness; and let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea and birds of the air and the beasts and the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." But the skill of the Divine Artist was not exhausted when He made man. For in the year 15 B. C., God made Mary. Excepting, of course, the Perfect Humanity of the Son of God, Mary is the acme of created beauty.

How is this so? Mary is at the topmost rung of the ladder of creation because of the singular privileges with which God adorned her soul and because of the extraordinary graces He made her capable of attaining. Last November 1st marked, as it were, the universal exhibition day of the gallery of Mary's soul. The museum of the display was the newly defined dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. In the Office of the Feast, the Church places on the tongues of the Angels these words of the Song of Songs: "Who is she that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" What was it the Angels saw? They saw all the Mysteries of Our Lady's life, by which this triumph was realized, for all the other feasts of Mary are reflected in that of the Assumption into Heaven. Let us try to grasp what this means.

Foremost among the glories of Mary is the Immaculate Conception. When our First Parents fell, God cursed the human race, and the stain of Adam's sin became the unenviable inheritance of every one of us. It was not so much that each of us was punished by God for Adam's sin; the fact was that, as his children, we all shared in the result of his sin. But that His Son might have a worthy dwelling place, God saw fit to exempt Mary from the stain of this sin by a special dispensation. Though entirely a daughter of Adam, she so far surpasses her parents and brothers and sisters that it is as easy to distinguish her from them as it is to discern the sun from the stars.

The Immaculate Conception is the main cause of the Assumption. As a matter of fact, the Assumption may be termed a corollary to the Immaculate Conception; the latter commemorating the stainlessness of soul, the former, the subsequent stainlessness of body. St.

Augustine declared that everyone knows sin, except, he adds immediately, "the Holy Virgin Mary, of whom for the honor of the Lord I will have no question whatever, where sin is concerned." Notice his reason; "For the honor of the Lord". It was not fitting that the Mother of God should possess the slightest imperfection. Now, Mary was quite human, made, like every one of us, of body and soul. If God preserved her soul from imperfection for His honor, He must have preserved her body also, and for the same reason. We may use the axiom the Franciscan, Duns Scotus, developed in defending the Immaculate Conception: *decimi, poiuti, fecit*. God *ought* to have exempted His Mother from the corruption of the grave on account of the dignity of His Son. He certainly had the *power* to do so; it is, then, impossible to escape the conclusion that He *did*.

The Presentation of Our Lady in the Temple is the next of her feasts upon which we shall dwell. It is a tradition of Holy Mother Church that, at the age of three, the child Mary was presented in the Temple of Jerusalem, where she served for twelve years. In simple outline, that is all the Presentation is. But there is a world of significance in it! For, if all the works of the Lord bless the Lord and give Him glory, how much more must Mary, the fairest of His works, have been on fire to proclaim to the world an unending *Magnificat*. With what consuming love she must have offered herself to God! And how pleasing to Him her humble oblation!

The Assumption is a necessary complement to the Presentation. God seems to say; "This is my beloved child in whose loving, humble, persevering service I am well pleased." If the bodies of many Saints and holy persons have been preserved from corruption because of their ardent devotion to and service of God, it is most fitting that Mary's body, whose service and love had been His from her tenderest years in the Temple, should be free from decay and should even precede theirs into glory. In the words of the Liturgy, "Thou alone, without an equal, hast pleased our Lord Jesus Christ."

"To what shall I compare thee? or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction . . ." Who is this virgin daughter of whom the Prophet speaks so pitifully? Actually, of course, he was referring to the destruction of the Holy City, but the Church applies his words to Mary on Calvary. See her at her station beneath the Cross, her sensitive heart breaking with pain to see her Son writhing in his death agony. Mary and Jesus are the only Ones who can ever fathom the deep sorrow of that hour. The stream of Blood from the Sacred Head of Christ keeps before her mind the shameful indignities of the crowning with thorns: those open wounds are speaking of the terrors of the scourging; while each thud, as iron drives iron through the Hands of her Boy, gnaws at her very soul. And, oh, how utterly useless! For she knows that even so, many, many souls will walk some shady lane of life and cast a mere casual, unfeeling glance towards her Son, their Savior.

"To what shall I equal thee that I may comfort thee?" I shall equal you to the Queen Assumed into Heaven, for greater than all thy sufferings is thy glory! Indeed, if there is one prerogative, besides the Immaculate Conception, which merited the Assumption for Our Lady,

it is the Dolours*. Life on earth has been a martyrdom even for the Incarnate God, who had not whereon to lay His Head, and likewise for His most afflicted Mother. But just as Christ's glory succeeded His Passion and Death, so Mary's Assumption followed her glorious victory in the Dolours.

St. Luke tells us in the opening Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that after the Ascension of Our Lord into heaven, all the disciples stood gazing up to heaven in wonder and amazement. But two angels appeared to them and said: "Why stand you looking up to heaven?" It was a gentle reprimand, not, indeed, for their gazing, but for their idleness. They were supposed to go into the vineyard and work, putting the Gospel into practice. The same holds true for Our Lady's Assumption. A consideration of the Assumption should not just bring forth from us sighs of admiration; it should also excite within us a feeling of duty to learn the lesson presented to us in -each Feast of Our Lady, since the Assumption is the crown of God's approval on them. It is a crowning of a *life of supereminent holiness*. This is evident in the three Feasts represented, and, in fact, in each and every one of her feasts. The Immaculate Conception, for instance, teaches us the sinlessness that is loved by God. A fruit of our contemplation of the Assumption, therefore, should be a constant striving after purity of body and soul that will merit the favor of God. The lesson of the Presentation is to endeavor to serve God in sanctity and holiness of life, with all our being, as Mary did during those first twelve years and during her whole life. And what a world of comfort comes from the consideration of the Sorrows of Our Lady! Man's life on earth is a fierce encounter with the world, the flesh and the devil—each one of them an enemy fiercer than Russia could ever be. The Assumption should be, in the midst of temptations, trials, and disappointments, an incentive to fight courageously and a pledge of ultimate victory.

*SORROWS