

the desert – to a place especially prepared for her by God. Later, after the devil’s defeat, John sees the woman given eagle’s wings to fly to a place in the desert where she would be nourished by God.

The picture Revelation paints serves as the biblical outline for the Church’s dogma of Mary’s Assumption. Mary is Daughter Zion, the woman who gave birth to the world’s Saviour. Because she is the New Eve, she is free from the shadow of sin and its consequences. This includes the long-term separation of soul and body that exists for the rest of us as we wait for the resurrection of the body at the end of time.

The encyclical also offers a number of other scripturally-based arguments in support of Mary’s Assumption. For example, the fullness of grace ascribed to Mary in Luke 1:28, and the accommodation of Genesis 3:15 to her, indicate that Mary was exempted from the curse of bodily death and corruption that had been laid upon Eve. (§30)

Also, the commandment to honour parents (cf. Exodus 20:11) was seen to imply Jesus’ care for Mary’s body after her death (§35). Finally, the bodily resurrection won by Jesus’ Resurrection in which “Death is swallowed up in victory,” (1Corinthians 15:54) is applicable to Mary as to all believers.

However, because Scripture and Tradition indicate the close link between Jesus and His Mother on earth, the link between Jesus’ bodily Resurrection and Mary’s share in it was assumed to be equally close. None of this constitutes explicit Scriptural proof of the doctrine of Mary’s Assumption. However, the Church considers this Marian privilege to be “in wonderful accord with those divine truths given us in Holy Scripture.” (§24)

Its status as infallibly revealed dogma rests on the living authority of the Church as the interpreter of Scripture, especially as to its comprehensiveness and overall finality.

In Heaven, we will be in awe of the holiness of the countless men and women who served God and others with selflessness and self-sacrifice throughout their lives. Among the countless saints in Heaven are a few who are chosen by God to become canonized and added to the liturgical calendar of the Church on Earth. These holy men and women are given to us as models for every day and age so as to inspire us on our journey of faith.

THE DONATION DRIVE for our 75th jubilee celebration is going well.

The family bring and braai after Holy Mass will take place outside the church hall on the 21st August.

All salads and bread rolls have been donated and will be provided to everyone in attendance. We would like to thank our donors for making this possible.

We have also received some refreshments and hereby appeal for additional donations in this regard.

An urgent appeal is still being made for cash to fund other key essential items required for this event.

We are also seeking items such as bottled water, cooldrinks, fruit juices, confectionary, and snacks such as sweets and chocolates.

All monies are to be deposited into the the parish bank account with proper reference details. Donated items can be left at the parish office by 17th August.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Catholic Church organizes its life around a cycle of feasts and remembrances that aim to sanctify certain times of the year and to regularly call to mind the life of Jesus and the witness of Mary and the saints.

The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is regarded as the most important Marian feast day in the Church’s calendar. The feast commemorates the end of the Immaculate Virgin’s earthly life, and her assumption into heaven — body and soul.

As the mother of God Incarnate, her role in God’s plan of salvation is central. As a result of her role in God’s plan, Mary joined her Divine Son in Heaven at the conclusion of her mortal life. This is Church dogma, which means we are obliged to profess it as an article of faith.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was proclaimed dogma in 1950 by Pope Pius XII, in the encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*, making it an infallible teaching of the Church. The encyclical states that “at the end of her earthly course, Mary was assumed into heavenly glory, body and soul.”

The encyclical does not specify whether or not the Blessed Virgin Mary experienced actual *death* before she was assumed into Heaven, body and soul. It is generally accepted, however, that she did die and was resurrected by God, but many Catholics believe she was assumed into heaven never having died, and there are no definitive teachings on her earthly ‘death’.

This uncertainty is reflected in the common reference to Mary’s “dormition” rather than to her “death”. The Cate-

chism of the Catholic Church (§964-970) reflects this uncertainty:

“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 more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death” (§966).

It must be understood that defining a dogma in the Church does not mean inventing a new teaching. Pius XII maintained that in defining the dogma of Mary’s Assumption, he merely fulfilled his divine commission to “faithfully propose the revelation delivered through the Apostles, or the deposit of faith”, and not to “manifest new doctrine” (§12).

The solemnity is one of the oldest feasts in the Church’s liturgical calendar, though its exact origin is uncertain. Regarding the day, year, and manner of Our Lady’s death, nothing certain is known. Catholic faith, however, has always derived our knowledge of the mystery from Apostolic Tradition. The dates assigned for it vary between three and fifteen years after Christ’s Ascension.

Tradition in the Church is not a locked chest. It is a vital force that purifies and is purified, that is ever ancient and ever young, and that informs all that the Church teaches and does.

As the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary has always been the subject of intense devotion in the Church. She was an exceptionally holy and sinless human being chosen by God to be the bearer of His Incarnate Word, making her instrumental in the salvation of the world.

Another characteristic of Mary was her *humility* before God. When the angel Gabriel visited her and told her she was to conceive the Son of God by the Holy Spirit, her response was to say: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word,” expressing her great *faith* and *obedience* to the will of God.

Mary’s obedience stands in contrast to Eve’s disobedience. For this reason, early Church Fathers like St. Augustine (354-430AD) and Origen of Alexandria (185-253AD) viewed the Mother of God as the new Eve in a similar way to how Paul’s epistle to the Romans (5:12-6:5) and his first epistle to the Corinthians (15:22) describe Christ as the second Adam.

Through her obedience to God, Our Lady begins God’s plan of salvation that reconciles creation to God after the fall that resulted from the first disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden, crushing the head of the serpent beneath her feet. But her role in the our redemption does not end there. It is fitting, therefore, that God should raise Mary to a level of glory so as to continue in Her role as Mother of the Church and Mediatrix of God’s graces in the economy of salvation. Consider the Catechism:

§967 By her complete adherence to the Father’s will, to his Son’s redemptive work, and to every prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary is the Church’s model of faith and charity. Thus she is a “preeminent and ... wholly unique member of the Church”; indeed, she is the “exemplary realization” (typus) of the Church.

§968 Her role in relation to the Church and to all humanity goes still further. “In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope, and burning charity in the Saviour’s work of restoring super-

natural life to souls. For this reason she is a mother to us in the order of grace.”

§969 “This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix.”

In ancient times, people referred to the feast of the Assumption of Our Lady as the feast of Our Lady of Glory. They understood that the Assumption of Our Lady was not merely the physical event of her leaving this earth after resurrecting by virtue of her Divine Son and being taken to Heaven: it was also her glorification.

At the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD, Emperor Marcian asked the Bishop of Jerusalem, St. Juvenal, to bring the relics of Mary to Constantinople to be enshrined there.

The bishop explained to the emperor that there were no relics of Mary in Jerusalem, that Mary ‘passed away’ in the presence of the apostles, but that her tomb, when opened upon the request of Thomas, was found to be empty. All they found was Mary’s burial robe. There was no body. The apostles concluded that the body was taken up to heaven.

The bishop explained that Thomas had missed Mary’s Dormition, and reached Jerusalem three days after her burial. He requested that the tomb be reopened so that he might pay his respects.

The Patristic Fathers defended the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin on two

counts: Since Mary was sinless and a perpetual virgin, she could not suffer death and bodily deterioration, the result of original sin, after her Dormition.

The dogma of the Assumption is a logical consequence of the dogma of her Immaculate Conception. Because she was a kind of Ark of the New Covenant, carrying the Church in the person of Christ, God preserved her from sin and wanted her in His presence when her time on earth ceased.

Also, if Mary bore Christ and played an intimate role as His mother in the redemption of man, then she must likewise share body and soul in His resurrection and glorification.

No saint has ever enjoyed such a privilege, because no saint ever had the relationship with Christ that Mary enjoyed. Mary was not just the first Christian. She was, for years, the only Christian; and the entire Church.

The dogma of the Assumption is not explicitly stated in the Bible, though it is supported there. The same applies to the dogma of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. The Church believes this dogma to have been present in Sacred Scripture or Apostolic Tradition, at least implicitly.

The encyclical mentions many “holy writers who ... employed statements and various images and analogies of Sacred Scripture to illustrate and to confirm the doctrine of the Assumption” (§29).

Among the biblical texts used in the encyclical is the woman clothed with the sun found in Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation. First and foremost, the woman is identified as Mary, the one “who brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron . . . [the one] caught up to God and his throne” (Rev 12:5). Revelation 12,

however, also uses imagery that reveals the woman to be Daughter Zion, the Queen-Bride of Israel, and the Mother of the Church.

John drives this point home by telling us that the woman wears a crown of twelve stars, an obvious symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel. But, throughout Revelation, the twelve tribes are also reckoned as signs of the twelve Apostles, the representatives of the new Israel, the Church (Revelation 7:4-8; 21:12-14).

The encyclical also refers to Isaiah 61:13: “I will glorify the place of my feet.” In likening the woman to the Queen Bride of Israel, John’s description of her echoes Isaiah, who said that Israel would be arrayed like a radiant Queen Bride (Isaiah 60:19-20; 62:3-5). So, just as Daughter Zion was a symbol of the chosen people of God – Israel – the woman in Revelation is also a symbol of the new people of God, the Church.

Paul, in language similar to that of Revelation, called the Church “the Jerusalem above ... our mother.” He also spoke of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Galatians 4:26; Ephesians 5:31-32).

The woman of Revelation, however, is more than a symbol for the Church. She is also its mother with “offspring” in addition to the one male child to whom she gives birth. And those children are described in Revelation as those who believe in Jesus.

In Revelation 12 we see a great battle which is a dramatic portrayal of the fulfillment of God’s promise in the Garden of Eden. The serpent lies in wait beneath the woman, preparing to devour her offspring. The birth of her son becomes the occasion for mortal combat.

During the battle, the woman flees into