

## Reflection for the Feast of the Assumption

*The Second Joyful Mystery: The Visitation,  
“The Blessed Virgin pays a visit to her cousin Elizabeth.”*

Today we as a Church throughout the world on this August 15<sup>th</sup> celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This feast celebrates the understanding that our Blessed Mother the ever-virgin mother of our Savior was assumed body and soul into heaven. It was in 1950 that Pope Pius XII made the infallible statement in the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, which officially defined for the Catholic Church the dogma of the Assumption. Pope Pius wrote in this Apostolic Constitution “*By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever-Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.*” It might seem a little late in a faith and Church that today dates back two thousand years that in 1950 the Church would finally get around to declaring the official dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of course, it was not until 2002 that the Church officially included the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary. These mysteries cover the three years of Jesus Christ’s ministry in this world.

Just like the Luminous Mysteries the understanding of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was already well developed in the early Church. Both the Luminous Mysteries and the Dogma of Assumption rely on sacred scripture. In looking at the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary we can turn to 1 Kings 8: 17-21 and see that just as Solomon brought the Ark of the Covenant to the Temple, Mary as the Ark of the New Covenant was brought to heaven to dwell where Christ is. Chapter 12 in the Book of Revelation of the New Testament speaks of a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and she gives birth to a child. This chapter of the Book of Revelation often is seen by many scholars as referring to Mary and her unique relationship with God and her part in the salvific plan for humanity. In the New and Old Testament there is no direct reference to Our Blessed Mother, Mary being assumed body and soul into heaven. It is clear that Scriptures from the Old and New Testament lay the foundation stones for the understanding and development of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We can turn to the saints and see how the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has been embraced from one generation to the next in life of the Church. According to St. John of Damascus, at the council of Chalcedon in the year 451 AD, the Byzantine Emperor Marcian requested the body of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for adoration in Constantinople. St. Jevenal, the Bishop of Jerusalem informed Emperor Marcian, that the Blessed Mother had passed away in the presence of all the Apostles, but that her tomb, when opened upon the request of St. Thomas the Apostle, it was found to be empty. The Apostles concluded that the body was taken to heaven by the Angels. By 8<sup>th</sup> century in the time of Pope Adrian, the Church renamed the Feast of the Memorial of Mary to the Assumption of Mary. By this time the belief in the Assumption was a widely held tradition.

Today as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Gospel reading on this feast is taken from the Gospel of Luke and relates the visit Mary makes to her cousin Elizabeth. Mary makes this visit after she was informed by the Angel Gabriel that she is to be the mother of the Savior of the World. At that same time the Angel Gabriel informed Mary that Elizabeth was six months pregnant. Mary chose not to stay at home and focus on herself but chose to go to Elizabeth and be there for her. Our Blessed Mother, through her visit to Elizabeth shows us the type of people we should be as we share Christ with the world. The Virgin Mary's focus was one of looking outward to help others and share Christ with the world. Mary did not focus on herself, but on others.

In closing as we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we have a role model and example of who we should be in our daily lives. Our focus should not be looking inwardly but rather looking externally so that we can share Christ with the world.