

TREASURES of OUR FAITH

by: Deacon Ryan Adams



Celebrated on August 15, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary commemorates Mary's bodily assumption into Heaven.

The Assumption completes God's work in Mary on earth, since it was not fitting that the flesh that had given life to God himself should ever undergo corruption. The Assumption is God's crowning of His work as Mary ends her earthly life and enters into eternity.

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven is a defined dogma of the Catholic Church. On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII, exercising papal infallibility, declared in *Munificentissimus Deus* that it is a dogma of the Church "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."

What Pope Pius XII solemnly declared was a very common belief amongst early Christians. What was clear from the very beginning was that there were no relics of Mary to be venerated, and that an empty tomb stood on the edge of Jerusalem near the site of where Mary's earthly life ended. That location soon became a place of pilgrimage for those early Christians. After the building of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the sacred sites began to be restored and memories of the life of Our Lord began to be celebrated by the people of Jerusalem. One of the memories about Jesus' Mother centered around the spot of Mary's "falling asleep," At this time, the "Memory of Mary" was being celebrated, which later became what we know as our Feast of the Assumption.

All the feast days of Mary mark the great mysteries of her life and her part in the work of redemption. The central mystery of her life and person is her divine motherhood, celebrated both at Christmas and on the feast of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The Immaculate Conception marks the preparation for that motherhood, so that she had the fullness of grace from the first moment of her existence, completely untouched by sin. Her whole being was one of divine life from the very beginning, readying her for the exalted role of Mother of our Lord.

The feast days of the Church are not just the commemoration of historical events; they do not look only to the past. They encourage us and call us to look to the present time and they give us an insight into our own relationship with God as well as inspirations to apply in our own lives.

Mary's life was indeed so inspirational, her life exemplified true morality and she shows us how to love unconditionally. Devotion to Mary instills in us compassion, tenderness, gentleness and strength, not just for our families and friends but for all the children of God. For us, Mary is a symbol of Church. As a disciple, Mary was at the foot of the cross all her life, just as all disciples are called to be, we are all called to be there with her. Mary's presence is often times seen in her love for those the world tends to forget, she is most at home on the fringes, in the alleyways, the places of the poor, in their homes and in their hearts. She is the original option for the poor an option each one of us are called live out. Devotion to Mary must be rooted in the concerns of the world, with equality, justice, responsibility for economic and political issues and the earth's survival in mind. Ultimately, any and all devotion must lead us to glorifying God. This is why Mary intercedes for us and is always pointing us in the direction of her Son Jesus. We learn from Mary how to be a blessing for others...