

The Assumption 2026

Vigil: 1 Chr 15:3-4, 15-16, 16:1-2; Ps 13; 1 Cor 15:54-57; Luke 11:27-28

Day: Apoc 11:19,12:1-6, 10; Ps 44; 1 Cor 15:20-26; Luke 1:39-56

The waves were crashing in around me and the wind was blowing hard.

I cried out in my distress 'Lord, I am sinking'.

Jesus said: 'Son of man, look down.'

I looked down and saw the waters from the sea flowing gently up over my feet, to my ankles and then recede again, leaving them half immersed in sand. I looked up again, feeling rather sheepish.

He looked at me straight in the eye and said, 'Now gather up your courage and follow me'. He turned his back on me and strode out upon the open expanse of heaving ocean, raising his arm once, beckoning me to follow.

I do not have any difficulty in believing the teaching of the Church about the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: I never have. If Mary was so special to God that she was chosen to be the Mother of God then she is uniquely special it seems to me. It seems perfectly fitting that if Jesus would honour her first with the gift that he wishes for all who follow Him, the resurrection of the body and life eternal. Just as I believe in Christmas and Mary's yes to the angel Gabriel, so I believe in the Assumption and Jesus' 'yes' to Mary. I do not believe in the Assumption because it says in the Bible '*And God assumed the Body of Mary into heaven where she sits as Queen of Heaven the right hand of Jesus interceding for sinners*', because of course it does not. I believe it because the Bible leaves pointers to the fact in place after place from the Old Testament through to the New. The Church has believed it since

early times and it seems to be the perfectly perfect and divinely rational cumulation of God's call to us.

I cannot lay it out all before you, that would take too much time. All I can do is trace it for you, with the lightest of touches.

What the early church believed and said is a good indication about what those closest to the time of Christ felt needed to be said and did not need to be said. The official teaching of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was only made in 1950, in the Apostolci Constitution Munificentissimus Deus, by Pope Pius XII. But dogmatic teachings of the Church are not innovations: they are clarifications and/or elaborations. The early church did not need a teaching, it understood. The modern church needed a teaching because it had become forgetful.

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Constantia in the 4th century, compared Mary to the prophet Elijah of whom he said, "who was virgin from his mother's womb, always remained so, and was taken up, but has not seen death."

There are the early Transitus Mariae texts (belonging to the 4th or 5th century). — narratives of Mary's passing — reflecting a deeply-rooted and wide-spread belief circulating in the early Church concerning the bodily assumption of Mary.

Since ancient times, there have been both in the East and in the West solemn liturgical services commemorating Mary's bodily assumption.

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By the fourth century, Christians celebrated the feast of Mary's Dormition (her 'falling asleep') and in the sixth century the Byzantine Emperor Mauritius established the celebration of the Dormition of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15 for the Eastern Church.

Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, made known to Emperor Marcian and Pulcheria that Mary died in the presence of all the Apostles, but that her tomb, was found empty. This is an extraordinary testimony: the empty tomb of Mary was affirmed at an ecumenical council. Here it is appropriate to observe that there is a remarkable silence concerning any relics of the Blessed Mother's body, which illustrates that the early Church – those avid relic hunters - believed Mary was indeed assumed into heaven, body and soul.

Gregory of Tours — c. 590 AD (The West) Theoteknos of Livias — c. 600 AD, (The East) Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem; ... the list goes on, all spoke of this understanding.¹

Why have so many believed what does not at first glance appear to be in scripture? Because they understood scripture. Christ is the new Adam, pure and virginal, as St Paul says², so Mary is the new Eve. Like Eve, Mary is created sinless. This is not a violation of the human condition. This is its restoration, so that instead of Eve's 'No' to God in the garden of Genesis, the world may be healed through Mary's pure 'Yes'. It is Mary at the wedding feast of Cana, who says to the servants 'Do whatever he tells you'³, inviting us to do the same. How could she

not be revered, and how could she not inherit the promise of Christ, who takes up the curse of the sin of Adam, which is death, and turns it into life and in doing so says: '*Behold your mother*'. Jesus says '*I am the resurrection and the life*',⁴ through his miracles and teaching he shows that indeed he is. At the Ascension we celebrate Jesus takes his resurrected body – our human form of flesh - into heaven. This is a sign of his promise to us. And so Mary as Mother of the New Humanity, has preceded us because she was made worthy. She is the ark of the Covenant in heaven, she is the Holy Virgin, and she, as evidenced through all the intercessory visions people have had of her, is just where Jesus wants her to be, in heaven praying for us.

As I followed Jesus, the waters became deeper, but I was not afraid.

¹ St. Germanus, Patriarch of Constantinople; St. Andrew, Bishop of Crete; John of Thessalonica; Hippolytus of Thebes; and the Venerable Bede throughout the 7th and 8th, St. John Damascene, St. Andrew of Crete, St. Modestus of Jerusalem, and St. Gregory of Tours, teach centuries the same thing.

² Corinthians 15:45-47

³ John 2:5

⁴ in John 11:25-26: