

## Assumption of Mary - 2021

I didn't know this, but the tomb of St. Francis was kept hidden for almost 600 hundred years. Now this was not due to any scandal he caused the people of Assisi— quite the opposite.

Throughout Christian history, and particularly in the Middle Ages, trafficking in saints' relics was “big business.”

It was an overly superstitious belief in their power that led to a black market in relics— wars were often waged in order to win another town's saintly remains.

The lack of tradition surrounding any “relics” of the Blessed Virgin is a sound rebuttal to all those (even Christians!) who doubt some of the more astounding truths of our Catholic faith— such as the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary, body, and soul into heaven.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, having left no earthly remains, neither first class relics, such as a bone fragment; nor second class relics, such as a piece of clothing, not even a third-class relic, another object believed to have come in contact with the saint.

Mary is accessible to us only through prayer. Perhaps that is why today's Gospel recounts the story of the second joyful mystery: the Visitation.

After the angel Gabriel tells Mary about her elderly cousin's pregnancy, she immediately sets out on a journey to visit her. However, we are not told why.

Mary might have been curious about the angel's story of the miracle that had befallen Elizabeth.

Or, perhaps, as a young unmarried woman with child, Mary leaves her hometown to avoid scandal, shame, and even persecution.

Then again, she may merely be exercising that gracious hospitality we would expect, visiting Elizabeth to help her through the difficult months ahead, with no thought, worry or hesitation about her own situation.

Whatever her motivation, Mary's encounter with Elizabeth begins a pattern of living that is so very familiar to us: Mary takes the praise that is justifiably offered to her and offers it to God instead.

Let us this night, as we celebrate this glorious feast, remain confident that our prayers and petitions to Mary are immediately presented to God in a voice more pleasing than we can ever hope to offer.