

Homily for the feast of the Assumption

I am currently reading a book entitled "Final Chapters: How famous authors died".. It may seem to you an odd choice. Death is a morbid subject. Understand please, that I celebrate many funeral masses and I'm always looking for fresh ideas in preparing my homilies. What is noteworthy in this one particular book, so chock full of information, is that in the modern era, few prominent authors believed in life after death. I suspect you are familiar with their names: Ernest Hemingway, Albert Camus, Simone De Beauvoir, Christopher Hitchens, Mark Twain and Jack London, among others.

London's is a case in point. The author of "The Call of the Wild" was an avowed atheist, who was fiercely anti-religious and held in contempt people of faith. He was quoted as saying, "I believe that when I am dead, I am dead. I believe that with my death, I am just as much obliterated as the last mosquito you and I squashed".

Such a despairing view of life is in marked contrast to what the Church proclaims in her creed, namely, "I believe in the Resurrection of the body and life everlasting".

Now fast forward to 2021. In a recent poll conducted in Italy, the cradle of Western civilization and the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church, data revealed that one in five Italians no longer believe in the life hereafter. Distressing indeed!

One reason why the Church celebrates feast such as the feast of the Assumption of the Mother of Our Lord, is that she wants us to think often of the hereafter where we will spend most of our existence.

The Assumption celebrates Mary's entry into the next life, a life of unending bliss with God.

This is the same bliss that awaits every one of us who exits this life in the grace of God.

In the person of Mary, the promise Jesus gave to his disciples on the eve of his death is fulfilled.

"And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be". (John: 14:3)

Not only Mary's soul but her body also was taken up to heaven upon her death. So there are two bodies in heaven, Christ's and his beloved mother, Mary.

The late Bishop Fulton Sheen received many converts into the church. One particular convert, a Chinese woman and a follower of the Chinese sage, Confucius, told the bishop that the one truth of the Catholic faith which was easier for her to believe was the assumption of Mary.

She explained: "I once knew a saintly woman who lived on a mat in the woods. Thousands of people visited to receive her blessing. One day according to the belief of all who knew the saint, she was assumed into heaven. "Her life", she said, "was so great that her body followed her soul".

One reason for believing in our Blessed Mother's Assumption is that her Divine Son loved her too much to let her remain in the grave. (Cardinal Newman).

Death does not end life.

We have a mother in heaven.

Heaven has a heart.

Mary is waiting for us!