

John the Baptist leapt for joy in the womb of Elizabeth. And Elizabeth gave verbal meaning to the actions of the infant still in the womb. “Blessed are you [Mary] among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb” (Luke 1:42).

On the 15th of August each year, we celebrate the Assumption of Mary. “The Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, on the completion of her earthly sojourn, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen of the universe, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and the conqueror of sin and death. (Lumen Gentium 59).

When we die, there is a separation of the body and soul. For those who die in God’s grace, the soul is purified in order that it may enter heaven. The resurrection of our body will take place at the end of the world. Pope Pius XII explains it this way:

Christ overcame sin and death by his own death, and one who through Baptism has been born again in a supernatural way has conquered sin and death through the same Christ. Yet, according to the general rule, God does not will to grant to the just the full effect of the victory over death until the end of time has come. And so it is that the bodies of even the just are corrupted after death, and only on the last day will they be joined, each to its own glorious soul (Munificentissimus Deus # 4).

With the Hail Mary, we echo the words of the Archangel Gabriel when we pray, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you.”

Through the centuries the Church has become ever more aware that Mary, “full of grace” through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception. That is what the dogmaⁱ of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: ‘The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.’ (CCC 491).

The Immaculate Virgin, conceived without sin, maintained that holy state in life by always choosing to do good and never turning from God. (CCC 493)

Our sin gives rise to our death. Saint Paul teaches: “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). James teaches, “desire conceives and brings forth sin, and when sin reaches maturity it gives birth to death” (1:15). Given the extraordinary grace by God, and Mary’s full cooperation throughout life, it is no wonder that Mary is not subject to death the way we are.

Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption on All Saints Day 1950. He did this acknowledging the longstanding tradition of the church and in consultation with bishops from around the world asking for the consent of clergy and laypeople as well. And as if to confirm from heaven itself,

At 4.00pm on October 30, 1950, during his ... walk in the Vatican Gardens ... having arrived to the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, [Pope Pius XII was awestruck by the miracle of the sun]...Pius XII said he saw the same phenomenon “the 31st of October and November 1, the day of the definition of the dogma of the Assumption, and then again November 8, and after that, no more.”ⁱⁱ

“The dogma of the Assumption affirms that Mary’s body was glorified after her death” (John Paul II, General Audience, 2 July 1997). There was no separation of body and soul. In the words of Pius XII “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” (Munificentissimus Deus # 44).

God honored Mary in choosing her to be unique in salvation history. We in turn honor God as we give our full assent to the Assumption of Mary into heaven. She was “taken up body and soul to the glory of heaven where, as Queen, she sits in splendor at the right hand of her Son, the immortal King of the Ages” (#40).

ⁱ The definition of the dogma, in conformity with the universal faith of the People of God, definitively excludes every doubt and calls for the express assent of all Christians. (JP II, General Audience, 2 July 1997)

ⁱⁱ medjugorjeca.org/dogma-of-the-assumption-and-the-miracle-of-the-sun/