



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

If matter is all there is, then you don't matter

Readings: Chronicles 15: 3-4, 15-16; 16: 1-2, Ps 131, Corinthians 15: 54-57, Luke 11: 27-28

On the feast of All Saints in the year of Our Lord 1950, the Holy Father, Pius XII, proclaimed, in *'Munificentissimus Deus'* (the Most Bountiful God'), the Dogma of the Assumption. People who do not understand the nature of the Church might be tempted to suggest that this was a little late in history to come up with such an idea and elevate it to the status of determinative doctrine.

The truth is that Pius XII was merely but definitively stating what the Church had known and believed and practised her devotions in the light of from the earliest times. In art, in liturgy, in popular piety, in the writings of the saints and in the sermons of the early fathers, the Assumption of Mary is understood and recognised.

That the new Eve, the Immaculate, the Holy Mother of God, the new Ark of the Covenant, the dwelling place of the Eternal Word, the Spirit-filled, the one utterly full of Grace should not see the corruption of the flesh, the normal heritage of sinful man, was a given of the Faith. It was calculable by divine logic.

That the most ancient churches bore witness to this is history. That the Eastern Orthodox churches tell the same truth in the Feast of the Dormition (the falling asleep) of Our Lady is foundational witness to this wonderful event.

But if there is overwhelming argument from the evidence there is also telling evidence from a significant omission. The dogma of the Assumption is technically agnostic about whether Mary died or not, though the implication of almost all teachers is that she did. (Indeed there are competing claims as to where her grave might have been).

The Dogma says simply: *By the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma: '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.'*

Let us assume that the overwhelming majority of sources are correct in assuming her death and then Assumption.

Let us then take the heretical position that, for all its piety and sources, the Dogma of the Assumption is but a glorious fairytale, an encouraging myth. Were that to have been the case and the body of St. Mary was in a well known shrine, I guarantee you that every altar in Christendom would have frantically sought a relic of the God-bearer. That has never been the case and such a telling omission argues conclusively for the unarguable truth of the Dogma.

Catholics do not doubt the truth of the Faith. However it is important to be able to help others understand it and to comprehend why its promulgation, nineteen centuries after its historical reality, was both the necessary fulfilment of the Church's long established wisdom and, as significant, a prophetic witness to the age in which it was finally given.

Pius XII, and the world to which he ministered, had just lived through an era in which six million bodies had disappeared like smoke up the chimneys of the

holocaust and countless millions more on the battlefields across continents and oceans. The satanic forces of Nazism and their eastern allies enslaved to a perverted death cult had pronounced their damnation on human life. The merciless torture and mutilations by the Imperial armies of the East, the scientific annihilation of the Europeans leaving piles of hair, teeth, shoes, spectacles and gold fillings all bore testimony to their hatred of God's supreme creation, Man, and their reduction of everything there is to simple unredeemable matter.

These philosophies, so painstakingly defeated by our forefathers, have lived on to triumph in secular materialism and the death camps of our own time, the clinics where the future is sacrificed and the wards where the old and the helpless are euthanized.

Pius XII was not telling the Church something she did not know. He was reminding her, in an age of darkness, of the supreme dignity of man, of the ultimate redeemability of the flesh in which God Himself was pleased to dwell. In the person of Mary we see the perfection of God's creation and the final destiny of all who will bear Christ into the world.

If matter is all there is... then you don't matter. That is the fatal logic of the prevailing philosophies of our age. The Assumption contradicts them all by asserting the invincibility of God's good purposes and intention for Man.

In the Resurrection of Christ and in the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, we see the glorious translation of the whole human being into our eternal destiny in the Presence. That is the full Gospel hope. It is what you would expect from the Catholic Church.