

# Pope Pius XII's Proclamation on Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary

(Continued from Page 27)  
 considered the teaching opposed to the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption as temerarious, if not heretical.

Thus, like many others, St. Peter Canisius, after he had declared that the very word "Assumption" signifies the glorification, not only of the soul but also of the body, and that the Church has venerated and has solemnly celebrated this mystery of Mary's Assumption for many centuries, adds these words of warning: "This teaching has already been accepted for ages. It has been held as certain in the minds of the pious people, and it has been taught to the entire Church in such a way that those who deny that Mary's body has been assumed into heaven are not to be listened to patiently but are everywhere to be denounced as over-confident or rash men, and as imbued with a spirit that is heretical rather than Catholic." (42)

At the same time the great Suarez, when he was professing in the field of Mariology the norm that "keeping in mind the standards of propriety, and when there is no contradiction or repugnance on the part of Scripture, the mysteries of grace which God has wrought in the Virgin must be measured not by the ordinary laws but by the divine omnipotence" (13). Supported by the common faith of the entire Church on the subject of the mystery of the Assumption, he could conclude that this mystery was to be believed with the same firmness of assent as that given to the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. Thus he already held that such truths could be defined.

Sacred Writings  
 All these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation. These set the revered Mother of God as it were before our very eyes as most intimately joined to her divine Son and as always sharing His lot. Consequently it seems impossible to think of her, the one who conceived Christ, brought Him forth, gave Him milk held Him in her arms, and fondled Him at her breast, as being apart from Him in body even though not in soul. Since our Redeemer is the Son of Mary, He could not do otherwise, as the perfect observer of God's law, than to honor, not only His eternal Father, but also His most beloved Mother. And, since it was within His power to grant her this great honor, to preserve her from the corruption of the tomb, we must believe that He really acted in this way.

We must remember especially that, since the Second Century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve, who, although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium, (44) finally resulted in that most complete victory over the sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles. (45)

Consequently, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body, for the same Apostle says: "when this mortal thing hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory." (46)

Hence the revered Mother of God, from all eternity joined



**FUNERAL OF THE VIRGIN:** The artist Bossolano has depicted here the Apostles grouped around the body of the Mother of Jesus. According to Jerome, Archbishop of Jerusalem (401), "An ancient and very trustworthy tradition says that the Apostles heard voices performed by angelic choirs round the tomb of the Blessed Virgin for three days after interment. Opening the tomb, at the request of one not present at the Virgin's death, they found it empty. The Apostles then understood that God had been pleased to preserve her body from corruption."

in a hidden way with Jesus Christ in one and the same decree of predestination. (47) Immaculate in her conception, a most perfect virgin in her divine motherhood, the noble associate of the divine Redeemer who has won a complete triumph over sin and its consequences, was finally granted, as the supreme culmination of her privileges, that she should be preserved free from the corruption of the tomb and that like her own Son, having overcome death, she might be 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. (48)

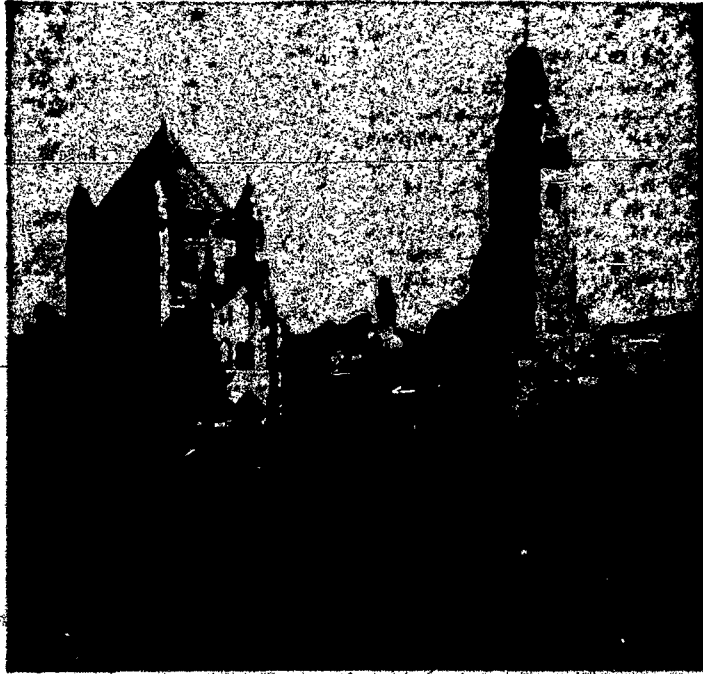
Since the Universal Church, within which dwells the Spirit of Truth who infallibly directs it towards an ever more perfect knowledge of the revealed truths, has expressed its own belief many times over the course of the centuries, and since the Bishops of the entire world have almost unanimously petitioned that the truth of the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven should be defined as a dogma of divine and Catholic faith — this truth which is based on the Sacred Writings, which is thoroughly rooted in the minds of the faithful, which has been approved in ecclesiastical worship from the most remote times, which is completely in harmony with the other revealed truths, and which has been expounded and explained magnificently in the work, the science, and the wisdom of the theologians — We believe that the moment appointed in the plan of divine providence for this outstanding privilege of the Virgin Mary has already arrived.

**Blessings To World**  
 We, who have placed Our pontificate under the special patronage of the most holy Virgin, to whom We have had recourse so often in times of grave trouble, We who have consecrated the entire human race to her Immaculate Heart in public ceremonies, and who have time and time again experienced her powerful protection, are confident that this solemn proclamation and definition of the Assumption will contribute in no small way to the advantage of human society, since it redounds to the glory of the Most Blessed Trinity, to which the Blessed

Mother of God was bound by such singular bonds.  
 It is to be hoped that all the faithful will be stirred up to a stronger piety towards their heavenly Mother, and that the souls of all those who glory in the Christian name may be moved by the desire of sharing in the unity of Christ's Mystical Body and of increasing their love for her who in all things shows her motherly heart to the members of this august Body. And so we may hope that those who meditate upon the glorious example of the Virgin Mary offers up may be more and more convinced of the value of a human life entirely devoted to carrying out the heavenly Father's will and to bringing good to others.

Thus, while the illusory teachings of materialism and the corruption of morals that threaten to extinguish the light of virtue and to ruin the lives of men by exciting discord among them, in this magnificent way all may see clearly to what a lofty goal our bodies and souls are destined. Finally it is our hope that belief in Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven will make our belief in our own resurrection stronger and render it more effective.

We rejoice greatly that this solemn event falls, according to the design of God's providence, during this Holy Year, so that We are able, while the great Jubilee is being observed, to adorn the brow of God's Virgin Mother with this new gem, and to leave a monument



**CHURCH AND TOMB OF OUR LADY:** The Church of Our Lady outside the Zion Gate, Jerusalem, is now in Israel territory. A stone in the Chapel of the Virgin is said to mark the spot where, according to tradition, Our Blessed Mother "fell asleep in the Lord."

any public notary and furnished with the seal of a person constituted in ecclesiastical dignity, should, when they are tendered or shown, be accorded by all men the same reception they would give to these present Letters.

It is forbidden to any man to change a page of this, Our declaration, pronouncement, and definition or, by rash attempt, to oppose and counter it. If any man should presume to make such an attempt, let him know that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, in the year of the great Jubilee, 1950, on the first day of the month of November, on the Feast of All Saints, in the twelfth year of Our pontificate.  
 I Pius, Bishop of the Catholic Church, have signed, as defining.

**FOOTNOTE REFERENCES**

- (1) Cf. Rom. 8: 28; (2) Gal. 4: 4; (3) Cf. Heinrich Von Moos, Petitiones de Assumptione corporis B. Virginis Mariæ in caelum definitivæ ad B. Sacerdotem Polignot Press, 1942; (4) Acta, 2028; (5) The Fall Ineffabile Deus, in the Acta 24 IX, Para 1, Vol. 1, p. 615; (6) Cf. The Vatican Council, Constitution Dei Fides, c. 4; (7) Cf. John, 14: 26; (8) Vatican Council, Constitution Pastor aeternus, c. 4; (9) Ibid., Dei Fides, c. 3.
- (10) The encyclical Mediator Dei (Acta Apostolicae Sedis, XXXIX, 547); (11) Sacramentarium Gregorianum; (12) Manuel Iolas anal; (13) Cf. Luke, 22: 32; (14) Liber Pontificalis; (15) Ibid.; (16) Responsa Nicolai Papae I ad consilia Basilicenses; (17) St. John Damascene, Enchiridion in definitionem Dei Genetricis omnipotentis Virginis Mariæ, Hom. II, n. 14; cf. also Ibid., n. 3; (18) St. Germanus of Constantinople, In Sanctis Dei Genetricis Dornationem Sermo 1; (19) The Enchiridion in Definitionem Sanctissimae Dominae Nostrae Deiparae sempervirginis Virginis Mariæ, attributed to St. Modestus of Jerusalem; n. 14.
- (20) Cf. St. John Damascene, op. cit., Hom. II, n. 11; and also the Enchiridion attributed to St. Modestus; (21) Pseudo 131; (22) Pseudo 44; 10, 14 ff.; (23) Canon 3; cf. also 4; 5; 6; 9; (24) Apoc. 12: 1 ff.; (25) Luke, 1: 28; (26) Amadeus of Lausanne, De Beata Virgine Obitu, Assumptione in caelum Exaltatione ad Firm dexteras; (27) Isidore, 61: 13; (28) St. Anthony of Padua, Sermones dominicales ad in sollicitudibus, In Assumptione B. Mariæ Virginis sermo; (29) St. Albert the Great, Mar. q. 122.
- (30) St. Albert the Great, Sermones de Beata, Sermo XV in Assumptione B. Mariæ; cf. also Bernardus, q. 122; (31) Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theol., III, q. 27, a. 1; q. 83, a. 5, ad 2; Epistola ad Theod. Augustinus; In Synod. Apostolicorum expeditio, a. 5; In IV Sent., d. 12, q. 1, a. 3, ad 5; d. 43, q. 1, a. 3, ad 1, 2; (32) Cf. St. Bonaventura, De Nativitate B. Mariæ Virginis, sermo V; (33) Cant. 5: 5; (34) St. Bonaventura, De Assumptione B. Mariæ Virginis, sermo 1; (35) St. Bernardine of Siena, In Assumptione B. Mariæ Virginis, sermo 1; (36) Ibid.; (37) St. Robert Bellarmine, Consensus, In Assumptione B. Mariæ Virginis; (38) Orationes de St. Francisca de Sales, sermo for the feast of the Assumption; (39) St. Alphonsus Liguori, The Glories of Mary, Part 2, d. 1.
- (40) Cf. Eph. 5: 27; (41) I Tim. 3: 15; (42) St. Peter Canisius, De Beata Virgine; (43) Suarez, De Beata Virgine B. Thomae, q. 77, a. 2, sup. 3, sec. 3, n. 21; (44) Gen. 3: 15; (45) I Cor. 15: 21-26, 54-57; (46) I Cor. 15: 54; (47) The Bull Ineffabile Deus, Acta, 24 IX, p. 615; (48) Cf. I Tim. II, 17.