



CHURCH OF SAINT MARY

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MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH CHURCH

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Dear Parish Family,

August 15, 2010

This weekend is the Solemnity of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven. St. Mary of the Assumption is the patroness of the Diocese of Saginaw, and today is our diocesan feast day. Our own St. Mary's Church has as its patroness St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception. So, one of our parish feast days is December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception; the other is March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph.

Also this weekend, on Saturday, we welcome Bishop Joseph Cistone to St. Mary's Church. Thank you to all of the staff and committee members who came for the installation ceremony. Thank you, as well, to everyone who prepared the reception after Mass.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this year's Vacation Bible School a success! I hope that the students had as much fun as I did! The crafts were awesome, and the students were very attentive. To everyone who participated - THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

I continue to be impressed with the generosity of individuals who assist at weekend and daily Masses. Thank you to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the lectors, the singers and cantors, and especially the altar servers. The Holy Father, in addressing a group of 53,000 altar servers last month had this to say:

"Carry out with love, with devotion and with faithfulness your task of serving; prepare yourselves well for the Holy Mass! Helping your priests in the service at the altar you contribute to making Jesus closer, to being ever more present in the world, in everyday life, in the Church and in every place."

Finally, if anyone is thinning out plants, we could take some off your hands to fill in any empty spots in our landscaping. Or if you know how to trim trees or have a green thumb and are willing to help out - please stop by the rectory and see me.

Thank you for all of your prayers, support, and assistance! Let us keep praying for each other daily. See you in church, on the bike path, or out in town.

Fr. David

The Faith Explained **The Assumption of Mary**

The Assumption of Mary was the bodily taking up of the Virgin Mary into Heaven at the end of her life. The Church teaches as dogma that Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This doctrine was dogmatically and infallibly defined by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950, in his Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. In the east, it is called the 'Dormition.' The Assumption is a Solemnity, commonly celebrated on August 15. In many places in the world it is a Holy Day of Obligation.

The Assumption is important to many Catholic and Orthodox Christians as the Virgin Mary's heavenly birthday (the day that Mary was received into Heaven). Her acceptance into the glory of Heaven is seen as the symbol of the promise made by Jesus to all persevering Christians that they too will be received into paradise.

In his August 15, 2004, homily given at Lourdes, Venerable Pope John Paul II quoted John 14:3 as one of the scriptural bases for understanding the dogma of the Assumption of Mary. In this verse, Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will receive you to myself; that where I am, you may be there also." According to Marian theology, Mary is the pledge of the fulfillment of Christ's promise.

The Four Marian Dogmas

There are four dogmas stating Mary's personal relationship with God and her role in human salvation .

1) Divine Motherhood - Mary's divine motherhood was proclaimed at the Council of Ephesus in 431.

Various names are used to describe Mary's role as mother of Jesus. She is called "*Mother of God*" which translates the more accurately stated greek term "*Theotokos*" or "*Birthgiver of God*."

The Council of Ephesus (431) attributed to Mary the title, Mother of God. This needs to be read against the Council's declaration that in Christ there are two natures, one divine and one human, but only one person. Indeed, according to the Council the holy virgin is the Mother of God since she begot according to the flesh the Word of God made flesh. This decision was further explained by the Council of Chalcedon (451) which says with regard to Mary's divine motherhood:

"...begotten from the Father before the ages as regards his godhead, and in the last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, as regards his manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten..."

Mary's Divine Motherhood was not the object of an independent or exclusive dogmatic declaration. The statement is embedded in texts defining the person and natures of Jesus Christ. Thus, the dogma of Divine Motherhood becomes an integral part of the christological dogma. This does not diminish its definitive and binding character. The dogma of Divine Motherhood is generally accepted by all Christian denominations.

2) Perpetual Virginity - The expression perpetual virginity, ever-virgin, or simply "*the Virgin Mary*" refers primarily to the conception and birth of Jesus. From the first formulations of faith, especially in baptismal formulas or professions of faith, the Church professed that Jesus Christ was conceived without human seed by the power of the Holy Spirit only. Here lies the decisive meaning of expressions such as "*conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary*," "*Mary's virginal conception*," or "*virgin birth*." The early baptismal formula (since the 3rd century) state Mary's virginity without further explaining it, but there is no doubt about its physical meaning. Later statements are more explicit. Mary conceived "without any detriment to her virginity, which remained inviolate even after his birth" (*Lateran Council*, 649).

The Church holds as dogma that Mary was and is Virgin before, in and after Christ's birth. It stresses thus the radical novelty of the Incarnation and Mary's no less radical and exclusive dedication to her mission as mother of her Son, Jesus Christ. Vatican II reiterated the teaching about Mary, the Ever-Virgin, by stating that Christ's birth did not diminish Mary's virginal integrity but sanctified it.

3) Immaculate Conception - The solemn definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception is like Divine Motherhood and Perpetual Virginity part of the christological doctrine, but it was proclaimed as an independent dogma by Pope Pius IX in his Apostolic Constitution *Ineffabilis Deus*. Though highlighting a privilege of Mary it in fact stresses the dignity

and holiness required to become "*Mother of God*." The privilege of the Immaculate Conception is the source and basis for Mary's all-holiness as Mother of God.

More specifically, the dogma of the Immaculate Conception states "that the most Blessed Virgin Mary, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege from Almighty God and in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, was kept free of every stain of original sin."

This dogma has both a "*negative*" and a "*positive*" meaning which complement each other. The "*negative*" meaning stresses Mary's freedom from original sin thanks to the anticipated or retroactive (here called *preventive*) grace of Christ's redemptive act. By the same token, the dogma suggests Mary's all-holiness. This "*positive*" meaning is the consequence of the absence of original sin. Mary's life is permanently and intimately related to God, and thus she is the all-holy.

Although difficult to explain, original sin provokes disorderliness in thought and behavior, especially with regard to the primacy of God's presence in our life. Consequently, in declaring Mary immaculately conceived, the Church sees in Mary one who never denied God the least sign of love. Thus, the dogma declares that from her beginning Mary was exceptionally holy and in constant union with the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

4) The Assumption - This marian dogma was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII on November 1, 1950 in his Encyclical *Munificentissimus Deus*.

A distinction needs to be made between Ascension and Assumption. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Risen Lord, ascended into heaven, a sign of divine power. Mary, on the contrary, was elevated or assumed into heaven by the power and grace of God. The dogmas states that

"Mary, Immaculate Mother of God ever Virgin, after finishing the course of her life on earth, was taken up in body and soul to heavenly glory."

This definition as well as that of the Immaculate Conception makes not only reference to the universal, certain and firm consent of the Magisterium but makes allusion to the concordant belief of the faithful. The Assumption had been a part of the Church's spiritual and doctrinal patrimony for centuries. It had been part of theological reflection but also of the liturgy and was part of the sense of the faithful.

This dogma is understood as the logical conclusion of Mary's vocation on earth, and the way she lived her life in union with God and her mission – as a consequence of Divine Motherhood. Being through, with, and for her Son on earth, it is fitting for Mary to be through, with, and for her Son in heaven, too. The Assumption tells us that this association continues in heaven.

The definition of the dogma does not say how the transition from Mary's earthly state to her heavenly state happened. Did Mary die? Was she assumed to heaven without prior separation of soul and body? The question remains open for discussion. However, the opinion that Mary passed through death as her Son did, has the stronger support in tradition.

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