

August 15

FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN

156.1 First Point

The Most Blessed Virgin, filled with the love of God throughout her life, remained on earth only with reluctance and solely through submission to God's will. For this reason death appeared to her pleasant and desirable, and because her soul held on to her body so lightly, as it were, she died without pain. The extreme joy she felt at that moment, caused by the desire to see God who possessed her, filled her soul with such consolation that she easily went from earth to heaven without any struggle. Blessed detachment from the bonds of her body in the soul of Mary, already detached from whatever could have attached her to earth!

Since we have left the world, nothing should be able to attach us to it. We should always be ready to die. This is the consequence of detachment from all things. We find it hard to die because we find it hard to leave what we love and what holds on to us. Strive, then, to imitate the Most Blessed Virgin in her total detachment, and ask God through her intercession for the grace of a happy death.

156.2 Second Point

The Most Blessed Virgin did not remain in the tomb for long, a few days after her death she rose again. It was quite proper that God grant her such a favor, for without doubt it would not have been fitting that the flesh from which the flesh of Jesus Christ came should suffer corruption. It was, moreover, worthy of God's goodness that the very special purity of the Most Blessed Virgin be rewarded by so great a favor.

How, O my God! could you have allowed that the body of the Most Blessed Virgin, which had been the tabernacle of your Incarnate Word, the Temple of the Holy Spirit,⁷⁵¹ and the sacred ark of a soul filled with your grace, should be for a long time separated from that soul and not be honored even after death with all the favors it could possibly receive?

The special grace we should ask of the Most Blessed Virgin on this day is to be removed and freed from the corruption of the world,⁷⁵² and especially to have great purity, which is the true incorruptibility that we should procure for our bodies. Since the Most Blessed Virgin possessed this virtue in all its perfection, she can help us very much to preserve it.

156.3 Third Point

The greatest favor that the Most Blessed Virgin received after her death, and which the church honors especially on this day, is that she was taken body and soul to heaven by the angels. It was quite right that her sacred body, which, as Saint John Damascene says, was a living heaven, be placed in heaven as soon as she left this world; that she who was the Mother of the Incarnate Word should be immediately raised up by him, to be placed near him, and to receive the honor deserved by this admirable privilege. It was for this reason that she was elevated above all the blessed spirits who honor her as their sovereign.

It was also quite right that because the Most Blessed Virgin had received an abundance of graces and had always been very faithful to them, she should be filled with glory and that her body, having been spiritualized by her renunciation of the pleasures of the senses, should die only to fulfill the common law and follow her soul to heaven.

If we detach ourselves entirely from our bodies, we shall lead a heavenly life on this earth, and when we die our bodies, having already acquired a sort of incorruptibility, will live forever before God by the transformation that will have been wrought in them by grace. Pray to the Most Blessed Virgin to obtain this favor for you today, that your body, sharing in the life of your soul by mortification of your senses, may no longer take pleasure in anything on this earth but may live in some way as though it were in heaven.

In 1950 Pope Pius XII defined the doctrine of Our Lady's Assumption, saying that the Immaculate Mother of God was assumed body and soul to heavenly glory. This statement embodies the two bases for the doctrine: her Immaculate Conception and her dignity as Mother of God. From earliest Christian times, even before the Council of Ephesus in 431, at which the doctrine of her being the Mother of God was defined, the *Dormitio Sanctae Mariae* was celebrated with the greatest solemnity by the Church. The term *dormitio* suggests a belief that Mary did not die (separation of body and soul), but only slept while body and soul were taken to heaven. De La Salle, however, accepts the fact of her death. Some theologians agree with him. The feast's stational church is the Basilica of Saint Mary Major and at different times during the centuries the Feast has been celebrated with a vigil and with a procession from the Forum.