There are feasts that the Church celebrates because they commemorate a particular event in the life of a saint. And there are others that seem to open a window directly onto heaven. The solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary undoubtedly belongs to this second category.

Every August 15, for many centuries, the Church has contemplated Mary not simply as a holy woman who completed her earthly life, but as the one who, by a singular privilege of God, was taken body and soul into heavenly glory. The traditional liturgy expresses this reality with extraordinary richness: it speaks of Mary's death, her *Dormition* or *Transit*, her glorification, her triumphant entrance into heaven, and her crowning as Queen.

We are therefore not dealing with a secondary Marian devotion. We are dealing with a profoundly Christological celebration, because everything the Church proclaims about Mary ultimately leads to Christ.

The Assumption reminds us of something our age urgently needs to hear: **the human body is not an object destined for consumption, pleasure, or destruction; it is called to the glory of the resurrection.**

And Mary is already, in anticipation, the luminous sign of what God wishes to accomplish in all those who remain united to Christ.

1. Before the Assumption came the *Transit*

To understand the richness of the feast, we must first pause over an ancient word: *Transit*.

The Christian tradition of the East usually speaks of the *Dormition* of the Mother of God (*Koímēsis*), while in the West we find expressions such as *Transitus Mariae*, *Dormitio*, *Pausatio*, *Depositio* and, later, *Assumptio*. The ancient texts and celebrations were not simply intended to satisfy historical curiosity about Mary's final moments. Their purpose was to contemplate a mystery: **the Mother of the Savior completes her earthly pilgrimage and enters into glory with her Son.**

It is important, however, to distinguish carefully between liturgical tradition and historical sources.

There are ancient accounts known as the *Transitus Mariae*, some of them apocryphal, which narrate the death, burial, and glorification of the Virgin. These texts are not themselves sources of divine Revelation, nor do they possess the authority of the Gospels. The Church

did not base the dogma of the Assumption simply on one of these accounts.

But they do show that, from the early centuries, there was a profound Christian conviction concerning Mary's glorious destiny. The Eastern liturgical tradition was already celebrating the Dormition in the fifth and sixth centuries, and the feast subsequently spread throughout the Christian world. In the West there are ancient testimonies to its celebration and, in Rome, it acquired particular solemnity during the pontificate of Pope Sergius I (687–701).

This is extraordinarily important.

The Church did not begin to believe in the Assumption in 1950.

In 1950 the Church solemnly defined as a dogma a truth that had been professed, celebrated, meditated upon, and transmitted for many centuries.

2. More than fifteen centuries of liturgical memory

The exact history of the feast is complex, and historians debate certain details concerning its earliest development. But one fundamental fact remains: the celebration of Mary's Dormition or Assumption belongs to the Church's most ancient liturgical tradition.

In the East there is evidence of a Marian celebration connected with Mary's departure as early as the fifth century. Later, the feast became established in Jerusalem and spread to other Christian regions. In the West it became associated with ancient sacramentaries and acquired particular solemnity in Rome.

Pope Sergius I introduced solemn processions connected with the principal Marian feasts, including the Dormition. Later, Pope Leo IV made the celebration of the Assumption even more solemn, establishing a vigil and other liturgical observances surrounding the feast.

The liturgy was saying something through its own gestures:

Mary does not simply belong to the past. Mary lives in the glory of God.

The procession, the litanies, the singing, the incense, the solemnity of the Mass, and the structure of the Office were not merely external ornaments. They were an authentic catechesis.

The traditional liturgy possesses precisely this characteristic: **it teaches the faith not only**

through concepts, but through symbols, words, silences, gestures, and sacred times.

3. From the *Transitus* to the *Assumptio*

There is a very significant development in terminology.

Transitus means "transit," a passage from one condition to another.

Dormitio means "dormition," a profoundly Christian way of speaking about death when it is contemplated in the light of the hope of the resurrection.

Assumptio, by contrast, emphasizes the action of God: Mary is assumed, raised by divine power.

This helps us understand the inner structure of the mystery.

The Church does not simply teach that Mary died.

Nor does she simply teach that her soul went to heaven.

The dogma affirms something much more precise: **Mary was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.**

And here we find an essential difference with regard to all the other saints.

The saints whom we venerate still await the resurrection of their bodies on the last day. Mary, by a most singular privilege connected with her mission and her union with Christ, already participates bodily in the glory of her Son.

Pope Pius XII solemnly expressed this in the apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*, promulgated on November 1, 1950: the Immaculate Mother of God, after completing the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

It is important to observe a theological precision: **the Church defined that Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life," was assumed into heaven, but she did not dogmatically define whether or not she died.**

The liturgical tradition of the Dormition strongly leans toward the reality of her death, but the dogma of 1950 deliberately left that question open.

4. The traditional liturgy turns theology into prayer

One of the great riches of the ancient Roman rite is that doctrine does not appear isolated from prayer.

The faithful do not need to attend a theology class to understand that they are celebrating something extraordinary. The Mass itself introduces them into the mystery.

The traditional Introit of the Mass of the Assumption begins with the words:

"Signum magnum apparuit in caelo: mulier amicta sole…"

"A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun…"

The reference comes from chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation:

> *"And a great sign appeared in heaven: a Woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars."*
> *(Rev 12:1)*

Catholic tradition has seen in this Woman a reference of extraordinary symbolic richness, related to the Church and, eminently, to Mary.

The liturgy contemplates the Virgin as **the glorified Woman, Queen, and sign of hope for the people of God.**

And this has enormous pastoral importance.

Modern Christians live surrounded by images of success, beauty, youth, and power that quickly disappear. Mary, by contrast, appears as a beauty that does not decay, a life that does not end in the grave, and an existence that finds its fulfillment in God.

5. Mary: humble on earth, glorious in heaven

The paradox of the Assumption is profoundly evangelical.

Mary was a humble young woman from Nazareth.

She did not belong to political elites.

She did not write philosophical treatises.

She did not hold public office.

She did not seek recognition.

Her greatness consisted in saying:

> *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to thy word."*
> *(Lk 1:38)*

And precisely this humility becomes glory.

The Magnificat expresses this divine logic perfectly:

> *"Because he has regarded the lowliness of his handmaid; for behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."*
> *(Lk 1:48)*

The Assumption is, in a certain sense, the visible culmination of these words.

God exalts the one who humbled herself.

God glorifies the one who obeyed.

God raises the one who gave herself.

The traditional liturgy preserves this logic with striking clarity: **true greatness does not consist in raising oneself up, but in allowing oneself to be raised by God.**

6. The Assumption is inseparable from Christ

There is a very frequent temptation when speaking about Mary: to turn Mariology into something independent of Christ.

Authentic Catholic tradition does exactly the opposite.

Mary is glorified because she is the Mother of Christ.

She is Immaculate because of the anticipated merits of Christ.

She is Mother of God because her Son is true God and true man.

She is assumed because her destiny is singularly united to Christ's victory over sin and death.

Therefore the Assumption does not compete with the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

Christ **ascends by his own divine power**.

Mary **is raised by the power of God**.

Christ is the Redeemer.

Mary is the first to be redeemed in an eminent and singular way.

Christ is the source of grace.

Mary is a creature completely transformed by that grace.

Everything leads back to the Savior.

Pius XII expressly connected the Assumption with Christ's victory over sin and death, presenting it as the culmination of the privileges granted to the Mother of the Redeemer.

7. The liturgical tradition announces the resurrection of the body

Perhaps this is one of the most relevant aspects of the feast today.

We live in a culture that, paradoxically, both idolizes and despises the body.

Physical appearance is exalted, yet the body is regarded as something completely subject to personal possession and disposal.

People constantly speak of bodily well-being, but forget its eternal destiny.

The Assumption breaks this way of thinking.

Mary's body is glorified.

This means that matter is not evil.

The body is not a prison for the soul.

Sexuality is not merely a biological mechanism.

Human life is not an accident without a destiny.

The body is part of the person and is called, by the grace of God, to participate in future glory.

Saint Paul proclaims:

> *"But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the spirit is alive because of righteousness."*
> *(Rom 8:10)*

And later he affirms the definitive hope of the resurrection.

The Assumption of Mary is precisely a privileged anticipation of this reality.

Pius XII expressly pointed out that faith in the Assumption should strengthen our hope in our own resurrection.

8. A feast against materialism and against spiritualism

The Assumption avoids two opposite errors.

The first is materialism: thinking that only what we can touch, measure, and possess exists.

The second is a disembodied spiritualism: imagining that salvation simply consists in abandoning the body and becoming a spirit.

Christianity teaches something much greater:

God wants to save the whole human person.

That is why we await the resurrection of the flesh.

Mary already participates bodily in that glory.

Her Assumption proclaims that the Christian's final destiny is not to disappear, but to be transformed.

The liturgy, therefore, does not invite us to despise the earth. It invites us to use earthly realities rightly while we journey toward our definitive homeland.

9. Mary as Queen

Liturgical and theological tradition also contemplates Mary as Queen.

Not because she is a divinity.

Not because she possesses authority independent of God.

But because she is the Mother of the King and is intimately associated with Christ's work.

The image of the Queen is also connected with Scripture and the tradition of the Church. The liturgy contemplates Mary entering into heavenly glory and participating, in a subordinate and dependent way, in the kingship of her Son.

For this reason the Assumption naturally leads to the feast of Mary Queen.

The ancient Catholic sensibility understood very well something that has often been lost today: **heaven is not an abstract idea; it is a kingdom, a homeland, a reality of glory centered on God.**

And Mary is already there.

10. The dogmatic definition of 1950 did not invent the tradition

One of the most frequent errors is to present the Assumption as a doctrine created by Pius XII.

That is not correct.

The dogmatic definition of 1950 was the culmination of a very long process of reflection, worship, preaching, and teaching.

Pius XII himself grounded the definition in multiple elements: Sacred Scripture, Tradition, the consensus of bishops and the faithful, the teaching of the Fathers and Doctors, and, very significantly, the ancient liturgical practice of both East and West.

The liturgy did not create the dogma.

But it manifested the faith of the Church throughout the centuries.

This is one of the reasons why the traditional liturgy is so valuable for Catholic formation: it allows us to see how a truth of faith was prayed before it was systematically explained in all its theological development.

Lex orandi, lex credendi: the law of prayer is intimately linked to the law of faith.

11. The spiritual message of the Assumption for our time

What can Mary assumed into heaven say to us in the twenty-first century?

Very much indeed.

First: **we were not created for this life alone.**

The modern world can make us live as though our horizon ended with retirement, consumption, entertainment, or death.

Mary reminds us that our existence has an eternal dimension.

Second: **purity matters.**

Mary teaches us that the body can be a temple of God and that virginity, chastity, and modesty are not relics of another age.

Third: **humility leads to true greatness.**

Contemporary culture constantly teaches us to promote ourselves, display ourselves, and compete.

The Gospel teaches us to serve.

Fourth: **suffering does not have the last word.**

Mary stood at the foot of the Cross.

The Mother of Sorrows becomes the glorified Mother.

The way of the Cross leads to glory when it is lived in union with Christ.

12. How to live the feast spiritually

The solemnity of the Assumption should not be reduced to a procession, a beautiful image, or a holiday.

It can become a true school of spirituality.

We can begin by attending Holy Mass with genuine recollection, taking care to read the liturgical texts beforehand.

We can pray the Holy Rosary, especially the Glorious Mysteries.

We can meditate on the Magnificat.

We can read Revelation 12 and 1 Corinthians 15.

We can contemplate the eternal destiny of our own body and ask ourselves whether we are living according to the dignity of one who is called to the resurrection.

And we can ask a simple but decisive question:

Am I walking toward heaven, or am I living as though this earth were my final destiny?

The Assumption forces us to lift our eyes.

13. The traditional liturgy as a school of eternity

Perhaps this is where one of the great treasures of the ancient liturgy is found.

In an accelerated society, the traditional liturgy slows the soul down.

In a culture saturated with words, it restores silence.

In a world that constantly changes its opinions, it preserves continuity across the centuries.

And when August 15 arrives, the whole tradition seems to be concentrated in a single image:

Mary enters into glory.

The Church does not contemplate her as a figure from the past, but as a reality present in God.

The Introit speaks of the Woman clothed with the sun.

The chant proclaims her exaltation.

The prayer asks that we may one day share in her glory.

The liturgy thus turns dogma into hope.

It does not merely say:

"This happened to Mary."

It also says:

"Look where the grace of God leads when it finds a creature completely surrendered to Him."

Conclusion: Mary has already arrived where we hope to arrive

The Assumption is one of the most luminous feasts in the entire Catholic calendar.

It begins with a humble woman from Nazareth and ends with a Queen in glory.

It begins with the *Fiat* and culminates in the coronation.

It begins on earth and ends in heaven.

It begins with a creature who says "let it be done" and ends with that same creature contemplated in the fullness of glory.

For more than fifteen centuries, the Church has accompanied this mystery with chants, processions, vigils, Masses, Offices, hymns, and prayers. The Eastern liturgy spoke of the *Dormition*; the Western tradition developed with increasing clarity the celebration of the *Assumption*. And in 1950 Pius XII solemnly confirmed as a dogma of faith what the Church had venerated and taught for centuries: Mary, upon completing her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

But the feast does not end with Mary.

The Assumption is also a promise.

Mary is the creature who has already arrived.

We are still on the way.

She beholds God face to face.

We still walk in the shadows of faith.

She possesses glory.

We await it.

Therefore, every August 15, the Church invites us to look toward heaven and remember what our true destiny is.

We were not created for the grave.

We were not created for sin.

We were not created for emptiness.

We were created for God.

And Mary Most Holy, assumed body and soul, remains before us as the most beautiful sign of that hope.

May contemplating her enable us to repeat with greater depth the words of her own canticle:

> ***"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."***
> *(Lk 1:46–47)*

For Mary's glory does not diminish the glory of Christ.

On the contrary.

The more highly we contemplate the Mother, the more we understand the greatness of the Son who redeemed her, sanctified her, and finally brought her with Him into glory.

And that, ultimately, is the great lesson of the Assumption: **whoever truly belongs to Christ is not walking toward nothingness, but toward the resurrection, eternal life, and the glory of God.**