There are moments of the year when the Church seems to speak to us in a language that everyone can understand, even before opening a book of theology. Autumn speaks to us of maturity and endings; winter, of waiting; spring, of life being renewed; and summer, with its golden fields, ripe fruits, and long days of light, seems to proclaim that creation has reached a moment of fullness.

At the heart of this summer, on August 15, the Church celebrates one of the oldest and most beautiful solemnities of Christianity: the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It is no coincidence that this feast has remained deeply connected with the rural traditions of numerous European peoples. Where the harvest was beginning to be gathered, where fruits were ripening, and where people contemplated with gratitude the result of months of work, the Church placed a feast that announced an infinitely greater harvest: the glorification of a human creature in body and soul.

From this arises a beautiful way of contemplating this period of the year as a true **“Summer of the Virgin”**: a time in which nature seems to reach its maturity while the liturgy reminds us that man’s ultimate destiny is not on earth, but in Heaven.

It is worth making a historical clarification, however. The expression “Summer of the Virgin” does not, strictly speaking, designate a universal liturgical institution of the Middle Ages, nor can it simply be attributed to a single documented medieval tradition. It is more accurate to speak of a **set of customs, feasts, blessings of fruits and herbs, agricultural celebrations, and Marian devotions associated with the period of the Assumption**. The strength of popular tradition intertwined these elements until it transformed the heart of August into a particularly Marian season.

And it is precisely here that we find something of enormous value for the Christian of today.

The Assumption: When the Harvest Becomes Theology

The Church teaches as a truth of faith that the Blessed Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed into heavenly glory body and soul.

Pope Pius XII solemnly defined this dogma on November 1, 1950, through the apostolic constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*. But the dogmatic definition did not invent the doctrine: it solemnly confirmed a faith that had been venerated and transmitted for centuries. Christian tradition had celebrated the Dormition and glorification of Mary long before the modern dogmatic definition.

Saint Paul offers one of the deepest biblical images for understanding this mystery:

> *“Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20).*

Christ is the true firstfruits. He is the first to rise gloriously. But Mary, united to her Son in a uniquely profound way, already participates in this victory in an anticipatory manner.

For this reason, Saint John Paul II explained that Mary is the **“first to share in the divine covenant”** fully accomplished in Christ and that her glorification constitutes a promise of our own resurrection.

Here we see the extraordinary connection with traditional agriculture.

The farmer looks upon the first ripe fruit and knows that it is not simply an isolated fruit. It is a sign. It announces that the harvest is coming.

In the same way, glorified Mary is a **firstfruits of redeemed humanity**.

She shows us beforehand what God wishes to accomplish in all those who remain united to Christ.

August 15 at the Heart of Christian Summer

The feast of the Assumption does not appear at an arbitrary point in the calendar. It falls in the middle of summer, when in many regions of the Northern Hemisphere the fields have reached their maturity.

For a rural society, this was enormously important.

Medieval man did not live separated from the rhythms of nature. He depended on rain, sunlight, the fertility of the soil, the ripening of wheat, grapes, fruit trees, and the protection of animals.

The harvest was not simply an economic matter.

It was a matter of survival.

For this reason, the Christian religion could not be an experience disconnected from the countryside. The farmer worked, but he knew that he could not manufacture the sun. He sowed, but he could not create the seed. He cultivated the land, but he could not force it to produce.

Nature continually reminded him that man is a **co-worker**, not the absolute master of creation.

Sacred Scripture had already established this vision:

> *“The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with the seed in it according to their kinds” (Gen 1:12).*

Creation is a gift.

And human work becomes a grateful response to that gift.

The Blessing of Herbs and Fruits

One of the most interesting examples of this mentality appears in the ancient customs associated with August 15.

In various regions of Europe, especially in German-speaking countries, there exists a tradition of bringing herbs and plants to church to be blessed on the solemnity of the Assumption. The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* recognizes this custom and explains its connection with the Marian feast.

The theological importance of this gesture is greater than it might appear.

It was not simply a matter of bringing plants in order to obtain “good luck.”

The Church sought to direct toward God what in other cultures might have remained associated with magical practices. Christian blessing does not transform plants into magical objects, nor does it automatically guarantee health, prosperity, or protection.

Rather, it proclaims that **every creature comes from God and must lead man toward**

Him.

Blessing transforms the way we see.

The Christian looks at a plant and can say:

“This too is the work of God.”

He looks at wheat and remembers the Eucharist.

He looks at fruit and remembers the fruit of grace.

He contemplates the beauty of creation and remembers the Creator.

And he contemplates Mary glorified and understands that the whole of creation is destined for a fullness that we do not yet see.

Mary: The Earth That Gave the Eternal Fruit

Here we find a Marian symbolism of extraordinary richness.

Mary is the good soil that receives the Word.

She is the Virgin who says:

> *“Let it be done to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38).*

And from this “fiat” Jesus Christ is born.

The agricultural comparison is extraordinarily profound: the earth receives the seed, preserves it within itself, and finally produces fruit.

Mary receives in her womb the eternal Word made flesh.

But there is a fundamental difference: Mary’s fruit is not simply a fruit of the earth.

It is **Christ Himself**.

For this reason, Christian tradition has applied numerous images drawn from nature to Mary: enclosed garden, fountain, vineyard, lily, cedar, rose, fertile earth.

This does not mean turning nature into a divinity — something completely contrary to the Christian faith — but rather discovering in creation symbols that can help us contemplate God’s work.

The *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* itself observes that the association of herbs with the Virgin was encouraged by various biblical images applied to Mary and, in particular, by the reference to the shoot that springs from Jesse and produces the blessed fruit, Christ.

The Assumption as the Triumph of Redeemed Matter

There is also a particularly important teaching for our own time.

Mary’s Assumption affirms that **the human body matters**.

In a culture that oscillates between obsession with the body and contempt for it, the Church offers a radically different answer.

The body is not a prison for the soul.

Nor is it merely an object intended exclusively for pleasure.

It is not a commodity.

It is not something that can be manipulated without limits.

The body is part of the human person and is called to participate in eternal glory.

Mary is in Heaven not merely as a soul.

She is there **body and soul**.

Saint John Paul II emphasized precisely this uniqueness: while the bodily resurrection of other human beings will take place at the end of time, in Mary bodily glorification was anticipated through a special privilege.

For this reason, the Assumption constitutes a powerful defense of human dignity.

Christianity does not despise matter.

Matter has been assumed by Christ.

The Word became flesh.

Christ rose bodily.

Mary was glorified bodily.

And we too await:

> *“The resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”*

A Harvest That Is Not Yet Finished

The agricultural image can take us even further.

When a farmer gathers the first fruits, the harvest is not necessarily finished.

The firstfruits are precisely a promise of what is to come.

So we must understand Mary.

She is a sign of hope for the Church.

Pope Benedict XVI explained that in Mary, the new Eve, we contemplate “the beginning and image of the Church” and a “sign of sure hope” for Christians who are still pilgrims on earth.

The Church is still on her journey.

We are still struggling.

We still sin.

We still need conversion.

We still suffer illness, loss, aging, and death.

But Mary has already arrived.

She is like the first light announcing the complete dawn.

And precisely for this reason, the “Summer of the Virgin” can become a powerful catechesis.

What Can This Tradition Teach Us Today?

We live in a society that is practically disconnected from agricultural cycles. Many people buy food in supermarkets without even thinking about where it comes from.

We can have tomatoes in winter, out-of-season fruit, and food that has traveled thousands of miles.

Technology has reduced our direct dependence on nature.

But this can make us forget an elementary truth: **we are still creatures**.

We still depend upon God.

We still grow old.

We still need nourishment.

We are still subject to time.

We are still walking toward death.

And precisely for this reason, we need to recover a spirituality of gratitude.

The “Summer of the Virgin” can become a pastoral opportunity to teach families to look at creation in a Christian way.

Five Practices for Living a “Summer of the Virgin”

First: truly celebrate the Assumption.

August 15 should not be reduced to a popular festival, a family meal, or a day of vacation. It is a Marian solemnity of enormous importance. Participating in Holy Mass, praying the Rosary, and meditating on the mystery of the Assumption can restore this date to its

authentic meaning.

Second: bless the table and give thanks for food.

Every meal can become a small catechesis. Before eating, a simple prayer reminds us that food does not magically appear before us: behind it are the earth, water, human labor, and, above all, divine Providence.

Third: teach children the language of creation.

An excursion into the countryside can become a lesson in theology. Show them a stalk of wheat and speak about the Eucharist. Observe a seed and explain the Resurrection. Contemplate a fruit and speak about grace.

Fourth: abandon superstition.

A blessing does not work like an amulet.

Holy water is not magic.

A medal is not a talisman.

Blessed herbs are not objects endowed with autonomous powers.

Every sacramental leads to God and disposes man to receive His grace. When separated from faith, it can degenerate into superstition.

Fifth: look to Mary as our destination, not merely as our protection.

It is very beautiful to ask the Virgin to protect us.

But we should ask for something even deeper: that she lead us to Christ.

Mary is not the final point.

She is the maternal path that leads to the Son.

The True “Summer” of Our Life

Finally, there is a spiritual dimension that perhaps is the most beautiful.

Summer represents maturity.

But our life also needs to reach spiritual maturity.

Saint Paul speaks of those who produce fruit:

> *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22–23).*

What are we harvesting?

Because every human life eventually produces some kind of fruit.

Some produce resentment.

Others vanity.

Others selfishness.

Others, however, produce charity, patience, sacrifice, faithfulness, and holiness.

The Christian question is not simply how long we have lived.

It is **what fruit our life has produced**.

Mary shows us the answer.

Her entire existence was oriented toward God.

Her greatness did not consist in seeking herself, but in giving herself.

Her “fiat” was a seed.

Her motherhood was a seed.

Her sorrow beside the Cross was a seed.

Her perseverance with the Apostles was a seed.

And the Assumption reveals the definitive fruit of that faithfulness.

Mary, Firstfruits of the Eternal Harvest

Summer will end.

Our life will also end.

The fields that are golden today will be reaped.

The fruits will fall.

The leaves will change.

The vacations will end.

The years will pass.

But the Assumption proclaims that there is a harvest that does not end.

Christ has conquered death.

Mary already participates fully in this victory.

And we are called to it.

For this reason, the “Summer of the Virgin” can be much more than a beautiful popular expression. It can become a genuine school of spirituality for us.

When we contemplate a mature field, let us remember that our soul must also mature.

When we receive a fruit, let us remember that every creature is a gift.

When we see a stalk of wheat, let us remember the Eucharist.

When we celebrate August 15, let us remember that our destiny is not simply to grow old and disappear.

And when we lift our eyes toward Mary, let us remember that a human creature has already entered glory in the fullness of her being.

She is the harvest anticipated.

She is the first flower fully opened in the garden of Redemption.

She is the new Eve beside the new Adam.

She is the Mother who goes before us.

And her triumph does not take us away from the earth: **it teaches us for what purpose the earth was created and toward what destiny redeemed humanity is journeying**.

The Assumption, celebrated in the heart of summer, thus allows us to contemplate one of the great paradoxes of the Catholic faith: while the world looks upon summer as a season of passing fullness, the Church looks to Mary and reminds us that there is a fullness that does not wither.

The harvest of this world ends.

The harvest of God remains.

Therefore, in the midst of the August heat, the Church invites us to look toward Heaven.

And there we find a Woman.

A Mother.

A Queen.

A glorified human creature.

Mary Most Holy.

Assumed into Heaven, she is the living promise that fidelity to Christ never ends in failure.

As Benedict XVI stated while contemplating this mystery, the Assumption is an invitation to meditate upon the “true meaning and value of human existence in view of eternity.”

May this “Summer of the Virgin,” therefore, be not merely a beautiful memory of the piety of our ancestors.

May it also be a call for us.

To work while we have time.

To sow goodness.

To cultivate the soul.

To receive God’s gifts with gratitude.

To live united to Christ.

And to look toward Mary, because in her the Church already contemplates what, by the grace of God, she hopes to become one day.

The harvest began in Christ.
The first great human harvest blossomed in Mary.
And the definitive harvest will be the resurrection of the children of God.