

Dear Brothers and Sisters



Not many years after World War I, the world witnessed the horrors of the Second World War; the brutal Nazi regime, the unprovoked attacks of the American Fleet in Pearl Harbor, the obscenity of the Concentration Camps; the unspeakable evil of the extermination of six million Jews, and others. After the war there followed the escalating threat of nuclear war; the bitter legacy of Nazism and Fascism; and the steadily rising power of atheistic Communism.

It was partly in response to this reality, in so-called Christian Europe, that on All Saints Day, 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of Our Lady, body and soul, into heaven.

The Assumption is not a feast of Our Lady. It is THE FEAST! The greatest of her many feasts. We will celebrate it today, August 15<sup>th</sup>.

It commemorates Our Lady's death and burial, her rising to life, her Passover from this world, and her assumption into heaven, amidst the rejoicing of all the angels and saints.

In ancient times, the Churches of the West (and in some Eastern Churches still today) began this feast with an all-night vigil, mourning the death of Christ's mother. Then as Dawn broke and the sun rose, a great Eucharistic Liturgy was held in honor of Mary's resurrection and entry into eternal life.

Russian and Greek Orthodox Christians, as well as Eastern Catholics, keep this feast with amazing solemnity, calling it The Dormition or Falling Asleep of the Virgin.

Protestants most certainly share our faith in the deepest truths that this feast announces; the triumph of Christ's redemptive power over sin and death; and his victory over the grave and corruption.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters more readily understand such a celebration, believing as they do, in the bodily assumption of Moses, Enoch, and the great Prophet Elijah.

Muslims, who hold the Virgin Mary in very great respect and veneration, also proclaim her bodily assumption into the glory of heaven.

Now this feast has arrived for you and me. It is calling us to celebrate the beauty of human life, and the holiness and dignity of the human body. Our own life. Our own body.

This feast is especially meaningful for those of us whose lives are touched by suffering, loneliness and failure; those whose spirit is crushed by deep wounds or painful memories; or whose hearts are broken.

It is for those of us who long to experience the love of Our Lady, and her powerful intercession; her motherly care for our families and children, our friends and loved ones.

Come! Celebrate! Rejoice! Do not let the grace of this feast pass you by.

Fr. Sean