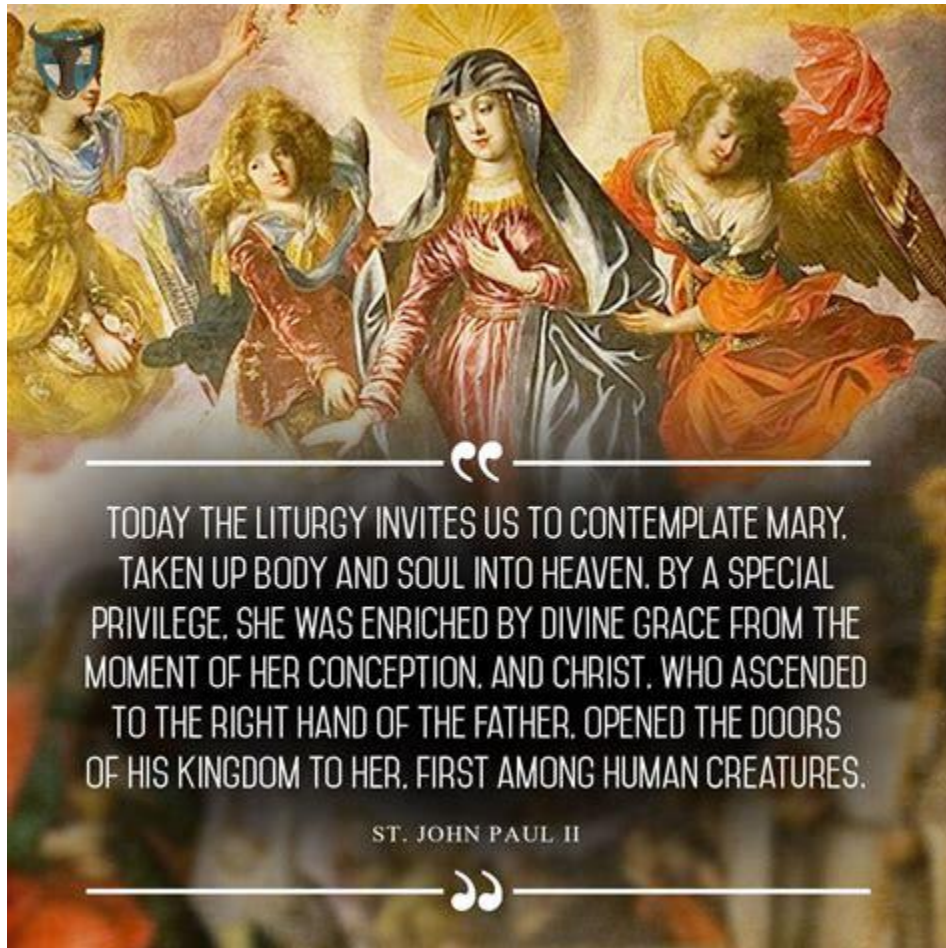


FROM FATHER JOHN: “And Mary said: ‘My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name. He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, and has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.’” (Luke 1:46 -55)



Friday was the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There are generally three questions that our protestant brothers and sisters ask us concerning our Blessed Mother. The first one is “why do Catholics worship Mary?” The answer to that question is simply “we don’t”. Catholics don’t worship Mary, we worship God and only God. What we do, however, is venerate Mary, honor Mary and love Mary because she is our Lord Jesus’ mother and as his adopted brothers and sisters, she is our Heavenly Mother.

The next question they often ask is, “then why do you venerate Mary.” We see the answer in our gospel “for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his Name.”

God has honored Mary in four ways, and we honor her because God has honored her. One, he chose her to be the mother of his son, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Two, by her Immaculate Conception God created her to be “*Full of grace*” and without sin so that she could be the Mother of our Lord Jesus. Three, He anointed her with His Holy Spirit at both the Annunciation and at Pentecost. Four, God allowed her to participate actively in Christ’s suffering and death as she suffered deep down in her soul what our Lord Jesus suffered in His body.

So, we honor and venerate Mary because she is our Heavenly Mother, given to us by our Lord Jesus as he hung on the cross. Mary is also our role model for all virtues; particularly, love, fidelity, humility, obedience, surrender to the will of God, and patience.

The third question is “Why do Catholics believe that Mary was taken directly to Heaven rather than dying and being buried in the ground?”

1. First, it is the interrupted tradition in the Catholic Church starting from the first century AD. The first trace of belief in the Virgin’s Assumption can be found in the earliest writings of the Church starting with a document entitled “*The Crossing Over of Mary*”.
2. The feast is found in all the ancient liturgies of the Church dating back to the earliest days of the Church
3. The belief in the assumption of Mary is taught by all early Fathers of the Church. A few examples: Origen (who died AD 253), St. Jerome (who died AD 419) and St. Augustine (who died AD 430) all taught that Mary was assumed into heaven.
4. There is negative evidence of her assumption. There never have been any relics of the Blessed Mother, nor is there record of a grave or tomb where early Christians venerated her.
5. There is Old Testament evidence of the corporal assumption of Enoch (Gn 5: 24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1).
6. Finally there are the theological reasons involving her Immaculate Conception and sinless life.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches, “The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son’s Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians.” When we celebrate the Assumption of Mary into heaven, we’re also celebrating our belief in the resurrection. She, who was preserved from original sin, as the *Catechism* reminds us, “was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory.” Mary participates in the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus and is a sign and hope of our resurrection as well.

Mary announced the coming of the Messiah with great joy, she boldly proclaimed the Good News, she sang of how God saves the poor, she brought the presence of the Son of God into the world. She does all this through her words, her actions; she does it with her very life. And because God has honored her and because she brought the hope of salvation into the world, we gladly sing her praises, we pray for her intercession before our Almighty God and we follow her example in living our Christian life.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.