

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Dogmas Awaken Us to Mystery** **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** Friday,  
August 15, 2014 7:30 PM Rev 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Cor 15:20-27a; Lk 1:39-56  
(There is no separation between the dimension of the divine and our own life.)

In discussing the mysteries of our faith **we are often tripped up by our imagination and by the imaginations of artists**, even great artists. So today we celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Mother. What does that mean? Well, what might come to your mind is **a body going through the clouds** because that's how it has been portrayed by many artists, even great ones. The same goes true for the Ascension of Jesus, same problem!

Now in the ancient world even, at the time of Christ, people believed that God resided above the clouds, as if there was a physical continuity between God's throne and the sky. So even the word "heavens" is used in two different ways. It means the sky and the lights of the sky, but it also means where God dwells, which we now know is an entirely different dimension.

**The point of it today's feast is the dimension where God dwells is not separable from our world. It's different, but inseparable.** That's the meaning of **Jesus' appearances on Easter Sunday and thereafter**, to show the apostles, yes, here I am. It's my wounds. It's me. It's my body, but it's different. I can pass through walls. This is **the dimension of the divine entering into the very physical presence of the apostles** and the others chosen beforehand to witness it. Likewise, with the Ascension of Christ he is now going body and soul, divinity and humanity, to this other dimension from where we all come: the throne of the Father, whatever you want to call it. And so with the **Blessed Mother** as well. She is now being celebrated as **fully redeemed, body and soul assumed into the throne room of God.** Again, just figures of speech. We are speaking about the origin of the mystery of our lives and of this world, **the Triune God from which we all come and to whom we are destined to return.**

It is very important that we realize that in the Christian Church, in the Catholic Church, we do not believe in the immortality of the soul. **We believe in the resurrection of the body.** That's a creedal belief. **That is an article of faith.** This led to a problem in the early Church. People said, "What happens when people die? Do they just sleep in the earth and wait until the general resurrection, or do they go with God and enjoy divine life?" Well, both views were accepted by various people. Popes have taught both of them. Prayers of the Church reflect both of them, although by far the more popular today is the second one. But even when the early Church believed in the first one that people simply sleep, they knew that not Mary, and not the apostles because they still had a job to do. So they had to be with God, with Christ, in order to help direct affairs of the Church. And **Mary also has something to do. She continues forever to be not only the mother of Christ, but the mother the Church. So she can't be asleep, so to speak. She has to be awake, functioning, ministering, loving**—that's the idea.

We pay heed to this when we recognize that, according to our faith, we cannot allow people, human beings, to starve. It's against our faith. It's not simply inconsiderate or selfish; **it's against our faith to let people starve, to let people go homeless, to let people be**

**without the necessities of life.** Not all religions believe that—just observe! But our Catholic faith does observe that. And that is the basis for what we call “social justice.” We pay heed to the fact that **there is no separation between the dimension of the divine and our own life,** our own home, our own space here on earth. They are meant to interpenetrate. **They must interpenetrate.** But we are often unaware of this interpenetration. **The dogmas of the Church are meant to awaken us to this mystery, this very important mystery that has many moral and ethical consequences.**

Now while on this subject of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother, Pope Pius XII mentioned that one of the earliest ideas found is that **Mary’s body was incorruptible.** And of course in this she is not unique. **The incorruptibility of certain people is a sign of this divine dimension already taking hold.** For example, if you go to Lourdes, you can see the body of **Bernadette Soubirous:** perfect, uncorrupted. And not only that, you can smell roses, and there are no roses around, but you can smell them. These are signs that God sends us to awaken in us the reality of the connection between the divine realm and ours. **Pope John XXIII:** I remember when he died in June of 1963, and I witnessed his body puff up on the bier in a hot St. Peter’s Basilica in June. And of course news commentators mentioned, “Oh, look at that body. It’s going to explode.” And of course the comment was made, “Well, you know, Italians don’t embalm.” So a couple years ago the body of Pope John XXIII was exhumed. Now why do Italians do this? I do not know, but they did. And lo and behold, that body is perfect. You can see his face like the day he died. **This is a sign of the divine sanctifying the physical order as a sign that the physical order has a destiny in God, albeit very transformed by the glory of the resurrection, but the same persons will be lifted up into glory.**

So as we contemplate the mystery of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother, I believe it’s important to let go of our imagination, so to speak, and **think about what it is the dogma is trying to awaken us to.**