

Resurrection of the Body **Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary** Friday,
August 15, 2014 8:15 AM Rev 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab; 1 Cor 15:20-27a; Lk 1:39-56
(We honor the body by caring for the poor, making sure no one is hungry, sleeps without shelter, or is neglected in terms of their healthcare.)

In understanding the mysteries of our faith sometimes our imagination works against us, and along with that goes the artists who try to picture for us the mysteries of our faith. In the case of Mary being assumed into heaven, I'm speaking of the picture of Mary in clouds. Does that help us understand the mystery of faith? Now the same with Jesus, the Ascension of Jesus in the clouds. Well, in the ancient world people actually thought that the sky was literally the dwelling place of God. **We understand that the dwelling place of God is a dimension totally different from the sky.** We understand the sky is an opening to this huge, remarkable universe that's billions of years old and cannot even be measured, but it isn't heaven. **Heaven is some other dimension.**

And in this dimension of heavenly life **there is Christ**, who has been raised from the dead, and the Church believes his **mother is with him**. What about all the souls of the saints? The Church firmly believes that the souls of the saints are also there. Are they in bodily form or not? We don't know. In the ancient Church many of even the smartest Fathers of the Church never thought that time itself was bound to the universe. But of course in our understanding of **time it is a measuring of the expansion of the universe. So it doesn't apply to this other dimension we call heaven.** We have to keep that in mind; we are trying to penetrate the mysteries of faith. In regard to the Mary's assumption, what is this about? It's about the affirmation that **Mary enjoys the fullness of divine glory, which we are all promised.** Do other saints enjoy it in fullness? We don't know. It is not the affirmation the Church; the Church simply doesn't know.

Going back in the history of the Church, there are two theories about the dead. One theory is that they just sleep in the earth until the day of resurrection. Some of our prayers fit that scenario. Another theory is, no, the saints, that is, those who are justified, actually go with God and enjoy eternal life already. And many of our prayers fit that scenario. Do we really know? Not exactly. But the presumption today is, or let's say the **preferred opinion** of the vast majority of believers and theologians and teachers and bishops is, that **the saints enjoy the full life of God; whether or not in bodily glory, we do not know.** The point is this is all part of a wonderful **gift that God is offering to everyone to live with God in eternity and to dwell with him.**

On the way toward this end, we recognize, however, that **certain people have been specially set apart.** For example, if you go to Lourdes, you can see the body of **Bernadette**. She has not decayed. How can that be? She wasn't even embalmed. Not only that, but there is a smell of roses emanating. How can that be? We call it a miracle, but of course that's no explanation. It's just a statement. How would an atheist explain this? I have no idea; they probably don't even want to look at it. Recently, about two years ago or so, maybe a little longer, the body of **Pope John XXIII** was dug up. I remember when he died, June of 1963, and he was not embalmed. They put his body on a bier in St. Peter's on a hot day in June. Rome in June is very hot. And it started to puff up. And people said, "Oh, that looks awful."

And they said, “You know, in Italy they don’t believe in embalming,” especially the Church doesn’t, so that’s what we do. This is the way we express our mortality, our frailty. And yet when his body was exhumed not that long ago, it was perfect. How could that be? I don’t know. I saw it myself last year.

So we know that we cannot explain through reason what we actually see with our own eyes. **The bodies of some saints have been preserved.** We can see that. That was part of the idea of the Assumption of Mary. There are bodies preserved without any kind corruption. But the second one pointed out by Pius XII in his decree declaring this a dogma of our Church, he said it’s not only that, but the Fathers also said that **Mary was already body and soul living the life of Christ.** So we have to keep in mind **we do not believe in the immortality of the soul; we believe in the resurrection of the body.** And this doctrine of our Church emphasizes that, that **we are all called eventually to reign with God body and soul,** not in some sort of abstract immortality of the mind, but body and soul.

On the way toward that, we have to keep in mind we have to honor the body. **We honor the body by caring for the poor, making sure no one is hungry, sleeps without shelter, or is neglected in terms of their healthcare.** That’s part of our commitment to caring for the body, **for our own bodies as well that we are healthful as possible,** that we do what’s right. So we do not live a life of abstraction. We live a life in the body and we live for God in the body, and **we believe that we will be raised up in the body and the soul for eternity.**