

Wednesday, August 15, 2007

The Feast of the Assumption

This week so far has been a little Marian feast all by itself for me. On Tuesday we celebrated the feast of [St. Maximilian Kolbe](#), a Polish priest martyred in Auschwitz who had a strong devotion to Mary. He started a newsletter with devotions and catechesis as a young priest with a circulation of over one million. I have been praying to St. Max since Monday in Mass to intercede for me to Jesus that I would develop more affection and devotion to the Mother of God, in the way Jesus wants me to. As a Protestant convert, we were so trained in "anti-Marianism" that it is often the largest stumbling block for the revert or convert to Catholicism as has been noted by others as well.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Assumption of Mary into heaven. The Church has held from apostolic times that Mary died a physical death and was then taken to heaven so that the body of the Mother of God would not see physical corruption. There are no relics of Mary, though the site of her place of death is thought to be in Jerusalem, while some have said she died in Ephesus since St. John lived with her for a time there.

"WHERE'S THAT IN THE BIBLE?" is the question often asked in my combox. As Catholics we are free from the notion that Scripture has to contain every single dogma of our faith. However, the Bible always supports Catholic doctrine and goes hand in hand with Sacred Tradition. There is no Scripture that would contradict Mary's Assumption into heaven. It would not be the first time that God "assumed" someone into heaven, and therefore how can we say that there is no possibility that Mary was assumed? Enoch (Gen 5:24) and Elijah never saw corruption, and perhaps Melchizedek did neither. Also, the saints who walked the earth after Christ rose from the dead were not corrupt either.

Since Catholics believe Mary is a type of Ark of the New Covenant, the bearer of the word of God, we have no issue with God choosing to assume her body uncorrupted into heaven upon her death. This doctrine really honors Jesus because He is perfect therefore even his bearer (Mary, theotokos), was sinless and allowed to not let the processes of decay occur to her after death! The same God that created the world, took Elijah to heaven, brought salvation to the earth in the form of little baby and suffered and died on the cross could certainly assume Mary's body into heaven where she continues to remain as the Queen of Heaven as the Revelation of St. John suggests. Mary may have still been alive when some of the NT was written and perhaps may support the reason why her assumption is not recorded.

In 1950, the Pope declared the Assumption of Mary to be dogma, meaning this belief held by the Church since apostolic times was now considered to be an essential belief for Catholics. Before it would have been optional for a practicing Catholic to accept this, after this proclamation, that was no longer an option. How can the Pope do that? It's that old property of the Keys, (Matt 16) binding and loosing things on earth and in heaven that the Church has been given by Christ.

Bottom line for me: I accept the [Assumption of Mary](#) because the Church that Christ started says it is true. It gives me hope that I too one day will be assumed into heaven and join the angels and saints to praise our Awesome Lord and Savior!

"All-powerful and ever-living God: You raised the sinless Virgin Mary, mother of your Son, body and soul, to the glory of heaven. May we see heaven as our final goal and come to share her glory."