

Concerning *Munificentissimus Deus*
The Feast of the Assumption
Luke 1:46-55

Fr. N.J.A. Humphrey
St. Thomas's, Toronto
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In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

It is August. Mindful of the fact that the procession and choral Mass setting will lengthen the service, I shall be brief.

On the feast of All Saints in 1950,
the patriarch of the West, the Bishop of Rome, Pope Pius XII,
defined the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in its current formulation.
In part, he wrote,
“...by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul,
and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare, and define it to be a divinely revealed dogma:
that the Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary,
having completed the course of her earthly life,
was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.

For his part, Kallistos Ware, that great 20th century Oxford scholar
(and convert from Anglicanism to Orthodoxy)
has written, “Orthodox tradition is clear and unwavering
in regard to the central point [of the Dormition]:
the Holy Virgin underwent, as did her Son, a physical death,
but her body—like His—was afterwards raised from the dead
and she was taken up into heaven,
in her body as well as in her soul.
She has passed beyond death and judgement,
and lives wholly in the Age to Come.
The Resurrection of the Body...
has in her case been anticipated and is already an accomplished fact.
That does not mean, however,
that she is dissociated from the rest of humanity and placed in a wholly different category:
for we all hope to share one day in that same glory of the Resurrection of the Body
which she enjoys even now.”

In other words, **Mary is now, by grace, where we, by grace, are headed.**

How tempting it is to dive right into the mud of apologetics, either pro or con.
But to do so would be to lose sight entirely of the woman at the heart of many a man's disputation:
Mary, the Virgin Mother of our Lord.

Whatever you think of the dogma's history, the bottom line for all Christians is this, my friends:

Mary is now, by grace, where we, by grace, are headed.

And *that* is something to celebrate with a feast.

So do not gaze into the abyss of dogma,
but look instead to the heavenly banquet,
because while some people might be flattered
to be the center of such disputatious attention as has been her lot,
I suspect that Mary herself is not.

No, Mary is most pleased when Mary herself is heeded.
Like any Mother, we do well to pay attention to her.
And what does she say?
“My soul doth magnify the Lord.”

We would do well to do what Mary did, and magnify the Lord with all our soul. *And* all our body.

For only by doing so will we be doing what Mary herself always does:
In all her words, sung or spoken, and in all her actions,
she points to her Son.

And it is only by pointing to the Son that we, by grace, will end up where Mary, by grace is now.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.