

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Solemn Evensong
In Saint Theresa of Avila Church
On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
August 14, 2016

+

The formal dogmatic teaching on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was promulgated in 1950. The apostolic constitution is called *Munificentissimus Deus*. It means “**The Most Bountiful God.**” Among other things the Assumption of Mary teaches that the termination of her physical life could never separate Mary from her Divine Son.

And then a little more than ten years after the formal definition, the Second Vatican Council linked the Blessed Virgin Mary to the Church as her mother, type, model, and pre-eminent member. The Council declared Mary this way: “She is hailed as the pre-eminent and altogether singular member of the Church, and as the Church’s model and excellent exemplar in faith and charity. Taught by the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church honors her with filial affection and piety as a most beloved mother.”

Mary’s Assumption revealed her solidarity with her Son. In the declaration of the Second Vatican Council we are taught *the other side of Mary*. She is also inseparable from the Church. The council established the firm linkage: “To Jesus through Mary.” Through Mary the whole Church is the recipient of the promise of the Lord Jesus that “Where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:3)

So the Second Vatican Council proclaimed that the Assumption is not just a personal dogma about Mary and that when her life on earth came to an end her body was taken up into Heaven. That remains part of the Church’s faith. But the understanding of the Assumption is immeasurably broadened to be seen as the first moment and preview of the glorious assumption of the whole Church and her members.

Christian theologians have sometimes dwelt unduly on the sinful condition of the human race. It is always necessary to speak the truth about our desperate condition. If we do not need saving we do not need a Saviour. But in glorifying God it is not necessary to put down man and point to the great distance between us and the God of Heaven. The glorious Assumption of Mary is the antidote. We can point to

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius
A sermon preached by Father Bradford at Solemn Evensong
In Saint Theresa of Avila Church
On the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
August 14, 2016

+

Mary when we assert Almighty God created human beings in His Own Image so they might enjoy communion with Him forever. Mary is our pioneer. She is our solitary boast.

In the Church Triumphant that work is complete. Led by the Blessed Virgin Mary and accompanied by all the saints, the faithful people of God take their place in the eternal Kingdom of glory and light. In the portion of the Church we call the Church Militant, here on earth, our yearly observance of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a gleam of glory. We celebrate it as one of the signs of the most hopeful and encouraging items in Catholic belief. The Assumption of Mary is not the product of excessive and irrelevant Catholic piety. The Assumption of Mary is part of the Gospel good news.