

Mary, Mother of God

Dogmas of Our Lady

1. Her Title as Mother of God
2. Her Perpetual Virginity
3. Her Immaculate Conception
4. Her Assumption into Heaven

The two truths which stand out like mountain peaks in the chain of revelation concerning Our Blessed Lady, and around which cluster all other truths we hold about her, are her divine maternity and her fullness of grace, both of which are affirmed in the Gospels and in the Councils of the Church. - Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP - The Mother of the Savior

Our Lady's greatest title is that of the "Mother of God" and, in view of that, she was created "full of grace". "To be the worthy Mother of God, Mary needed to receive fullness of grace", St Thomas (111a, q.27, a.5 corp. et ad2)

The Privileges of the Mother of God

1. Mary was conceived without stain of original sin (Immaculate Conception).
2. From her conception Mary was free from all motions of concupiscence.
3. In consequence of a Special Privilege of Grace from God, Mary was free from every personal sin during her whole life.
4. Mary was a Virgin, before during and after the Birth of Jesus Christ.
5. Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit without the cooperation of man.
6. Mary bore her Son without any violation of her virginal integrity.
7. Also after the birth of Jesus, Mary remained a virgin.
8. Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven.
from "Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma" by Ludwig Ott

Mary's Splendor

- from "The Mother of the Savior" by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP - Art IV

"... theologians commonly hold that Mary's initial grace was greater than the final grace of the highest of angels and men ..."

Again:

"Since Mary's first grace prepared her to be the worthy Mother of God, it must have been proportionate, at least remotely, to the divine maternity. But the final consummated grace of all the saints together is not proportionate to the divine maternity, since it belongs to an inferior order. Hence the final consummated grace of all the saints united is less than the first grace received by Mary."

Again:

"... In short, from the time she could merit and pray, Mary could obtain more without the saints than they could without her. But merit corresponds in degree to charity and sanctifying grace. Hence Mary received from the beginning of her life a degree of grace superior to that which the saints and angels united had attained to before their entry into heaven."

Even more amazingly:

"... Thus Mary, in virtue of the first grace which disposed her for the divine maternity, was worth more in God's eyes than all the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins united, more than all men and all angels created from the beginning."

Our Mother, too

"Mary's role in the sanctification of the Christian has been beautifully described in the writings of St. Louis Mary de

Montfort. Here is a synthesis of his teaching:

- all Christians are called to perfection and sanctity;
- to reach perfection it is necessary to practice and perfect the virtues;
- to practice the virtues we need the help of God's grace;
- to obtain God's grace it is necessary to receive it through Mary.

The reasons for the last statement are as follows:

- 1.of all God's creatures, only Mary found grace before God, both for herself and for others;
- 2.Mary gave birth to the Author of grace and is therefore called the Mother of grace;
- 3.in giving Mary his only begotten Son, the eternal Father gave Mary all graces;
- 4.God appointed Mary as dispenser of grace, and by reason of this office she gives grace to whom she wishes and when she wishes;
- 5.as in the natural order a child must have a father and a mother, so in the order of grace the Christian has God as the father and Mary as the mother;
- 6.since Mary formed the Head of the Mystical Body, she should also form the members;
- 7.Mary was and still remains the spouse of the Holy Spirit;
- 8.as in the natural order the child is nourished by its mother, in the supernatural order Mary nourishes and strengthens her children; and
- 9.he who finds Mary, finds Jesus, who is with her always."

Jordan Aumann, OP - Spiritual Theology

Source: <http://www.catholictreasury.info/mary.php>

From: http://www.theworkofgod.org/Library/Apologtc/R_Haddad/4dg2Mary.htm

Mother of God

It is often the case that one would hear the title of "Mother of God" as applied to the Blessed Virgin Mary disparaged as "Mariolatry" or blasphemy. Such an attack is normally coupled with the opinion that Catholics give too much honour to the Virgin Mary, and that She is not so important because little is said of Her in Sacred Scripture. What justification, therefore, can there be for such a title?

In the first book of the Old Testament we read the following: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel" (Gen. 3, 15). This verse, called the "protoevangelion," is the first promise of the redeeming Messiah. The woman in this verse is the Virgin Mary, Her offspring is, of course, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Despite the fact that there is distinct controversy among Biblical scholars as to whether the text should read "she", "he" or "it shall bruise"(or crush), the meaning is the same, as it is through Her Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Virgin Mary crushes Satan. 1

Genesis 3, 15, together with the following passages, form the basis for venerating the Virgin Mary as Mother of God:

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, His name shall be called Emmanuel (i.e., God with us)" (Is. 7, 14 [Douai]);

"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority

rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is. 9, 6);

"And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women" (St. Luke 1, 28 [Douai]);

"(St. Elizabeth to Our Lady) And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" (St. Luke 1, 43);

"...for he has regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed" (St. Luke 1, 48);

"...Woman, behold your son...(Son) behold your mother" (St. John 19, 26-27);

"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail" (Rev. 11, 19). The Ark of the Covenant was a symbolic type of the Virgin Mary. The original Ark was overladen with gold and contained within itself a pot of manna, Aaron's priestly rod, and the two tables of the Ten Commandments (Heb. 9, 4). It was overshadowed by a propitiatory, or mercy seat, upon which God Himself dwelt (the Shekinah) between two statues of Cherubim (Exod. 25). It was forbidden for anyone to touch the Ark on pain of death.

The Virgin Mary, in comparison, was a greater Ark, being a human creature immaculately conceived who carried within Her womb not simply the symbols of Christ, but Christ Himself. God, likewise, overshadowed Her, when the Holy Spirit conceived Christ within Her. Being a perpetual virgin, no one could, or did, "touch" Her. Joshua prostrated himself and venerated the Ark for hours (Josh. 7, 6). As "Joshua" means "Jesus" we have a type of Jesus venerating a type of Mary. Applying this to the New Testament figures themselves, it symbolically represents Jesus Christ paying veneration to His Mother.²

"A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12, 1);

"And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne" (Rev. 12, 5);

"Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her children, those who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 12, 17).

The Church distinguishes clearly between *dulia*, or "the homage of veneration," and *latria*, which signifies "the worship of adoration." Veneration is paid to the Saints; a higher form of it, called *hyperdulia*, is given to the Virgin Mary; but adoration is given only to God. Any attempt to give adoration to a creature would certainly be idolatrous - but the Catholic Church has never given it. She adores God and God alone.

Most Protestants abhor the title of "Mother of God" because to them it insinuates that Catholics believe that the Virgin Mary existed before God, and that God only came into existence after being born from Her. Such, of course, is an absurdity. In fact, the term "Mother of God" was defined by the Council of Ephesus (431 AD) in response to the Christological controversy ignited by Nestorius, then Patriarch of Constantinople. Nestorius asserted that in Christ there existed not one divine Person with two natures, human and divine, but two Persons, one human and one divine, with two natures, human and divine. Further, these two persons were not hypostatically united, but separate, the human being insignificant compared to the divine. Consequently, the Virgin Mary, as She supplied only Christ's human flesh and not His divinity, was only mother of Christ's humanity and therefore in no sense could be called Mother of God. The Church, upholding that Christ was one divine Person only, and noting that Mary was the mother of this divine Person (St. John 19, 25), defined dogmatically that She could properly be called "Mother of God":

"If anyone does not confess that the Emmanuel is in truth God, and that the Holy Virgin is Mother of God, because she bore according to the flesh of the Word of God when He became flesh: let him be anathema."³

St. Cyril of Alexandria would continue defending of the title "Mother of God" in the years after Ephesus:

"The Word, then, was God, and He became also Man; and since He was born according to the flesh for the sake of mankind, it is necessary that she who bore Him is the Mother of God. For if she did not bear God, neither is He that was born of her to be called God. If the divinely inspired

Scriptures name Him God, as God having been made man and incarnate, He could not become Man in any other way than through birth from a woman: how then should she who bore Him not be the Mother of God?"⁴

For the past fifteen centuries the Church has steadfastly continued to bestow the title "Mother of God" upon the Virgin Mary:

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will. Then began the fulfillment of the splendid promise made by God to Abraham, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should one day be blessed; for Mary, whom we truly proclaim and venerate as Mother of God, because she brought forth Him who is at once God and man, was descended from King David."⁵

"The Virgin Mary...is acknowledged and honoured as being truly the Mother of God and Mother of the Redeemer."⁶

"Glorious Theotokos..."⁷

"Called in the 'the mother of Jesus,' Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her Son, as 'the mother of my Lord.' In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly 'Mother of God' (Theotokos)."⁸

Perpetual Virginity

In the Bible we read the following passage:

"Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this? And they took offence at him" (St. Matt. 13, 54-57).

According to Fundamentalists, it appears clear from this passage that Jesus Christ had brothers and sisters, and that the Virgin Mary did not remain a virgin all Her life. Yet, the Catholic Church asserts that the Virgin Mary was a virgin before, during, and perpetually after the birth of Christ (*Ante partum*, *in partu*, *post partum*), a belief re-asserted during the first decades of the Protestant reformation:

" This immaculate and perpetual virginity forms, therefore, the just theme of our eulogy. Such was the work of the Holy Ghost, who at the Conception and birth of the Son so favoured the Virgin Mother as to impart to her fecundity while preserving inviolate her perpetual virginity."⁹

The Catholic answer to this apparent contradiction is long and detailed, but decisive. There existed no special word in Hebrew or Aramaic for "cousin." The word "brother" is used in these languages generically, and does not necessarily imply children of the same parent. There are many examples in the Old Testament when the word brother was applied to any kind of relations: nephew (Gen. 12, 5), uncle (Gen. 29, 15); husband (Songs. 4, 9); a member of the same tribe (2 Kgs. 9, 13); of the same people (Exod. 2, 21); an ally (Amos 1, 9); a friend (2 Kgs. 1, 26); one of the same office (1 Sam. 9, 13).¹⁰

A number of distinguished Catholic commentators, including

St. Thomas Aquinas¹¹, actually hold that the Virgin Mary had made a formal vow of perpetual virginity together with St. Joseph. A vow of virginity would help explain why the Virgin Mary was so perplexed after the Angel Gabriel announced to Her that She was about to bear the Messiah. According to contemporary Jewish custom, marriage was in two stages. The first stage, or betrothal, was when the marriage was effectively made. The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph had concluded this stage. Sexual relationships after this point were not considered as fornication. However, we know that nothing of this kind had yet taken place between the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph ("How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [St. Luke 1, 34]). The second stage of marriage was the social formality of the public celebration. The Virgin Mary and St. Joseph in all probability had to forego this second stage due to their flight to Egypt, nevertheless, this fact did not impugn the validity of their marriage.¹²

A further Protestant objection is founded on St. Matthew 1, 25 which states that St. Joseph "had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus." It is argued that this passage implies that the Virgin Mary had other children by St. Joseph after giving birth to Jesus. It would be well here to reproduce the footnote commentary on St. Matthew 1, 25 from the Douai-Rheims version of the New Testament:

"St. Jerome shows, by divers examples, that this expression of the Evangelist was a manner of speaking usual among the Hebrews, to denote by the word until, only what is done, without any regard to the future. Thus it is said, Genesis 8, 6 and 7, that Noe sent forth a raven, which went forth, and did not return till the waters were dried up on the earth. That is, did not return anymore. Also Isaias 46, 4, God says: I am till you grow old. Who dare infer that God should then cease to be?...God saith to his divine Son: Sit on my right till I make thy enemies thy footstool. Shall he sit no longer after his enemies are subdued?"

Further, according to the Jewish Law a child was designated as "first-born" irrespective of whether there were yet, or ever to be, subsequent children born to the same mother. This is gathered from Exodus 13, 2, which required that "every first-born that openeth the womb among the children of Israel" be consecrated to God forty days after their birth.

Who, then, exactly were the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ?

It is best to start by looking at St. John 19, 25. There it is evident that the Virgin Mary had an older sister whose name was also Mary: "Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."

Turning next to the Gospel of St. Mark 15, 40, speaking on the same point: "There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger (Less) and of Joses (Joseph), and Salome." Who is this "Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses?" Of the Marys mentioned in St. John 19, 25 it must be Mary the wife of Clopas, not Mary the "mother of Jesus," as the Virgin Mary is never mentioned by any other title except as "mother of Jesus." Further, we know that the father of James the younger was Clopas, the husband of Mary of Clopas (St. Mark 3, 18), making Mary of Clopas James' mother. As for Jude, he was also a son of Clopas and the Virgin Mary's sister as Scripture speaks of him as a brother of

James the younger: "James son of Alphaeus (Clopas), and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the brother of James" (Acts 1, 13 [Douai]). Consequently, Our Lord had cousins by the names of James, Joseph and Jude.¹³

One can safely state then that the "brothers" of Our Lord as mentioned in St. Matt. 13, 54 -57 being James, Joseph, Jude etc. are in fact the same James, Joseph and Jude just determined to be His cousins. This was St. Jerome's assertion in the early fourth century:

"Suppose that the Brethren of the Lord were Joseph's sons by another wife. But we understand the Brethren of the Lord to be not the sons of Joseph, but cousins of the Saviour, the sons of Mary, his mother's sister."¹⁴

St. Augustine was no less strident in his defence of the Virgin Mary's perpetual virginity:

"It is written (Ezekiel 44, 2): 'This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall pass through it. Because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it...' What means this closed gate in the house of the Lord, except that Mary is to be ever inviolate? What does it mean that 'no man shall pass through it,' save that Joseph shall not know her? And what is this - 'The Lord alone enters in and goeth out by it,' except that the Holy Ghost shall impregnate her, and that the Lord of Angels shall be born of her? And what means this - 'It shall be shut for evermore,' but that Mary is a Virgin before His birth, a Virgin in His birth, and a Virgin after His birth."¹⁵

It would be forcing credibility to believe that the Virgin Mary and Her older "sister" both had the same names and also had children with the same names. One can expect, also, that after St. Joseph died the Virgin Mary would have gone with Our Lord to live with or nearby Her older "sister," explaining why She was travelling with those mentioned in St. Matt. 12, 46. It is a clear example of the word "brother" being used to refer to a first or second cousin.

It is also important to examine closely three major events in Our Lord's life referred to in the Gospels: (i) the return of the Holy Family from Egypt to Nazareth after the death of Herod; (ii) the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem after being lost for three days; (iii) Our Lord giving His Mother to the care of St. John at His crucifixion. Our Lord, according to tradition, was 10, 12 and 33 years of age respectively when these events occurred. Yet, never is there any mention of brothers or sisters of His being present, which one would naturally expect if they had actually existed.¹⁶

Immaculate Conception

The Immaculate Conception is the Virgin Mary's glorious privilege of being preserved by a special grace of God from Original Sin through the future merits of Jesus Christ.

Protestants assert that the Virgin Mary could not have been immaculately conceived for then She would not have needed redemption. This is evidenced by Her own words in the Magnificat: "my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour" (St. Luke 1, 47). Further, St. John clearly states that "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us?" (1 St. John 1, 8). How can Catholics therefore claim that the Virgin Mary was sinless?"

The Catholic Church does not deny that the Virgin Mary

needed redemption, for She was a child of Adam together with the rest of humanity. Yet, Her redemption was effected in another, "more sublime manner", namely, "redemption by pre-emption." One can be cured of a disease after having contracted it, or one can be spared of that same disease by being inoculated against it in advance. The Virgin Mary's redemption was effected in this latter manner, thus sparing Her from ever being under Satan's domination.

The Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was solemnly defined and proclaimed by Pope Pius IX on the 8th December, 1854:

"The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin."¹⁷

The Immaculate Conception has always been the belief of the Church, being implicitly contained in the Church's teaching of the Virgin Mary's absolute purity and sinlessness. Just as Our Lord "grew in grace and wisdom," that is, manifested increasing signs of wisdom as He increased in age, so the Church, which possesses the wisdom of God from Her origin, manifests it only according to the order of Providence and Her children's needs. In the centuries before 1854, the Popes and Councils made continuous and explicit references to the Immaculate Conception in their pronouncements:

- (i) Pope St. Martin I, Lateran Council (649), Canon 3 on the Trinity;
- (ii) Pope Sixtus IV, Constitutions Cum Praeexcelsa (1476); Grave Nimis (1483);
- (iii) Pope Paul III, Council of Trent (1546), Decree on Original Sin;
- (iv) Pope St. Pius V, Bull Ex Omnibus Afflictionibus, (1567);
- (v) Pope Alexander VII, Bull Sollicitudo Omnium Eccl. (1661).¹⁸

The Church finds support for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in the words of the Angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women" (St. Luke 1, 28 [Douai]). She, who was to conceive the Son of God, the Holy of holies, must Herself be supremely holy, and therefore be preserved, not only from actual sin, but also from all stain of Original Sin. The Angel's words would not have been entirely truthful had the Virgin Mary, for even one instant, been deprived of grace.

St. Luke 1, 28 continues to be a source of much controversy. Most Protestants would prefer to render the original Greek kecharitomene as "highly favoured" rather than "full of grace." In fact, a strict translation of kecharitomene is "thou who hast been graced." Of the two options, "full of grace" is a more clear and definite rendering of the angel's words than "favour." For this conclusion there exists the authority of the Latin Fathers; the Codices of Alexandrinus and Ephrem; the Syriac and Arabic versions of the Bible; and even the writings of Protestants such as Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Beza.¹⁹

The Church, furthermore, asserts that God, immediately after Adam's fall, cursed Satan and said, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head" (Gen. 3, 15). It was by the Virgin Mary's seed, that is, Jesus Christ, that the kingdom of Satan was demolished. It was not fitting that She, who was to co-operate in the defeat of Satan, should ever be infected by

his breath or a slave to his kingdom of sin. The enmity between the Virgin Mary and the serpent placed by God was Her triumph over sin, Her Immaculate Conception.

To the contrary, however, it is asserted that the Virgin Mary again admitted that She was a sinner when She presented herself in the Temple for purification in accordance with the Law of Moses: "she shall take two turtledoves or two pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf, and she shall be clean" (Lev. 12, 8). The Virgin Mary observed this Law not because She believed Herself to be defiled by giving birth to Christ, but to give an example of humility and obedience by fulfilling all outward observances. For the Virgin Mary was not subject to this particular law by virtue of what God Himself had laid down in prefacing it: "If a woman having received seed shall bear a man child, she shall be unclean seven days..." (v. 2 [Douai]). The conception and birth of Christ was not due to the reception of male seed but rather to the power of the Holy Spirit. In no way can it be claimed that in conceiving, bearing and delivering Christ the Virgin Mary was made "unclean." In fact, the opposite would have occurred, that is, She would have received an augmentation of grace.²⁰

That God should have created the Virgin Mary in a state of holiness as He had formed Eve and the angels is also befitting the honor of God: of the Father, whose daughter She is; of the Son, whose mother She is; and of the Holy Spirit, who, in the incarnation, took the Virgin Mary to be His spouse. Further, as the "new Eve" and mother of the new Adam, the Virgin Mary cannot appropriately be anything less than the original Eve; on the contrary, as Christ excelled Adam, so the Virgin Mary (though to a lesser degree) should excel Eve. Tradition and the Magisterium of the Church has consistently and universally proclaimed the sinlessness of the Virgin Mary:

"Our most holy, immaculate, and most glorious Lady, Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary."²¹

"It was meet that the God of all purity should spring from the greatest purity, from the most pure bosom."²²

"Most holy Lady, Mother of God, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all perfection of purity...my Lady most holy, all-pure, all-immaculate, all-stainless, all-undefiled, all-incorrupt, all-inviolable."²³

"With the exception therefore of the Holy Virgin Mary, with regard to whom, when sin is in question, I cannot, out of respect of Our Lord, permit of any discussion."²⁴

"By virtue of the richness of the grace of the beloved Son, by reason of the redemptive merits of him who willed to become her Son, Mary was preserved from the inheritance of original sin. In this way, from the first moment of her conception - which is to say of her existence - she belonged to Christ, sharing in salvific and sanctifying grace and in the love which has its beginning in the 'Beloved', the Son of the Eternal Father..."²⁵

"The 'splendor of an entirely unique holiness' by which Mary is 'enriched from the first instant of her conception' comes wholly from Christ: she is 'redeemed, in a more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son.' The Father blessed Mary more than any other created person 'in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places' and chose her 'in Christ before the foundation of the world, to be holy

and blameless before him in love."26

Finally, for Catholics, the infallible pronouncement of Pius IX was given heavenly ratification by the Virgin Mary Herself when She appeared at Lourdes in southern France in 1858 and announced to St. Bernadette Soubirous that She was "the Immaculate Conception." The subsequent flow of thousands of miracles stemming from the waters of the Lourdes grotto attest to the authenticity of the Virgin Mary's apparitions and are a matter of public record for all to examine.

The Assumption

The final aspect of the Virgin Mary's uniqueness is Her assumption. The meaning of this doctrine is as follows: that by a special and singular privilege bestowed by God, the Virgin Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven and re-united with Our Lord Jesus Christ to reign with Him in His kingdom for all eternity.

After receiving over 85 000 petitions from Religious and Clergy, and over 8 000 000 from the lay faithful, Pope Pius XII infallibly proclaimed and defined the Dogma of the Virgin Mary's assumption on November 1, 1950:

"The Immaculate Mother of God, Mary Ever-Virgin, after her life on earth, was assumed, body and soul, into heavenly glory."27

This Definition, though, left open the question as to whether the Virgin Mary died before being assumed into heaven. Prima facie, as the Virgin Mary was free from Original Sin due to being immaculately conceived, She would also have been free from all its consequences, death being one of them. There are a number of great saints and theologians, however, such as St. Louis de Montfort, who hold that the Virgin Mary did die before being assumed due to Her wishing to be more conformed to Her Son who died for all humanity. Yet, this death was not accompanied by pain and suffering but rather, according to St. Francis de Sales, was a death of love, with Her soul leaving Her body out of Her great desire to be re-united with Christ.

The theological reasoning for belief in the assumption of the Virgin Mary is as follows: Christ, by His glorious death, resurrection and ascension, gained a perfect victory over the devil, sin and death. The Virgin Mary, as the immaculately conceived Mother of God and the New Eve, is most intimately associated with Christ's perfect victory (Gen. 3, 15). If there was no assumption of the Virgin Mary, She would have been vanquished by death and Her parallelism with Christ would therefore be destroyed.²⁸

No one can reasonably doubt that the Virgin Mary's soul is now in heaven; Jesus Christ would not have it otherwise: "A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars...And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron" (Rev. 12, 1-5). The doctrine of the Virgin Mary's assumption is not contained explicitly in Scripture, but the fact that Scripture does not record an event is no absolute argument against it. The Bible does not record the death of St. Joseph either, but all believe this must have happened.²⁹

Belief in the Virgin Mary's assumption can be traced back to the earliest days of the Church. A first century work attributed to St. Denis the Areopagite entitled the "Books of Divine Names" records a funeral panegyric pronounced by a said Hierotheus, who purported that the Apostles had been divinely warned of the impending death of the Virgin Mary. All, except St. Thomas, managed to return in time for Her death and funeral. For three days the Apostles and other faithful kept up a vigil at the Virgin's tomb, where they heard at times the distinct sound of heavenly music. When St. Thomas finally arrived, he requested to see the body of the Virgin Mary. To everyone's surprise, when the tomb was opened Her body was not there, only flowers and Her burial shroud being left in the sepulchre.³⁰

As early as the fifth century Catholics were celebrating a "memorial of Mary." This primitive celebration eventually evolved into the Feast of the Dormition (falling asleep) of the Virgin. Also in the fifth century St. Augustine would write:

"This venerable day has dawned, the day that surpasses all the festivals of the saints, this most exalted and most solemn day on which the Blessed Virgin was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory. On this day the queenly Virgin was exalted to the very throne of God the Father, and elevated to such a height that the angelic spirits are in admiration."³¹

Further homilies on the Assumption appeared during the 6th century. In the 8th century the following prayer was written for August 15:

"On this day the Holy Mother of God suffered temporal death, but could not be held fast by the bonds of death, who gave birth to Our Lord made flesh."³²

The bodies of the glorious Apostles, the Martyrs who shed their blood for Christ, men and women noted for their holiness, have been carefully preserved and venerated in the Church from the beginning of Christianity. While the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul are jealously possessed in Rome, no Christian city or centre has ever claimed to possess the bodily remains of the Virgin Mary. No doubt relics of the Virgin Mary would have been regarded of greater value than those of other Apostles or Saints, so close She was to Christ.

Of the Mother of God no relics were to remain. The Immaculate Conception, formed by the Holy Spirit, and which formed the body of Christ, would not be allowed to see corruption. In Her assumption, the Virgin Mary shows forth the fullness of redemption, and is an example of "the future lot of all the just"³³; "(t)he Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians."³⁴ On that last day all the Just, beholding the great glory of the Virgin Mary which will then be fully revealed, will unanimously declare unto Her, "thou art the glory of Jerusalem, the joy of Israel, the honor of our people."