

AUG 15: ONE-PAGE SYNOPSIS: ASSUMPTION DAY HOMILY (L/17)

We honor Mary, venerate her, express our love for her and never worship her. Why do we honor Mary: 1) Mary herself gives the most important reason in her *Magnificat*: “*All generations (ages) will call me blessed because **the Mighty One has done great things for me**” a) by choosing Mary as the mother of Jesus; b) by filling her with His Holy Spirit twice, first at the Annunciation and again at Pentecost; c) by creating her “full of grace,” the paragon or embodiment of all virtues; and d) by allowing her to become the most active participant, suffering in heart and soul what Jesus suffered in body. 2) ***Mary is our Heavenly Mother***. Jesus gave us his Mother as our Mother from the cross: “*Woman, behold your son.*” ... “*Behold your mother*” (John 19:26-27). 3) ***Mary is the supreme model of all virtues***, especially holiness of life (“*full of grace*”), obedience to the will of God (“*fiat*”) and true humility (“*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me as you have said*”) **and, hence, she is our role model.***

Reasons why we believe in the Dogma of the Assumption: Pope Pius XII in the papal document *Munificentimus Deus* gives four **reasons from Sacred Tradition** why we believe in the Dogma of the Assumption of Mary: 1) The uninterrupted tradition about Mary’s death and Assumption, starting with the first century. 2) The belief expressed in all the ancient liturgies of the Church. 3) The negative evidence: the absence and veneration of a tomb of Mary while most of the apostles have their tombs. 4) The possibility of bodily assumption warranted in the Old Testament in the cases of Enoch (Gn 5:24), perhaps Moses (Dt 34:5), and especially Elijah (II Kgs 2:1). The Pope also supplies **theological reasons:** 1) The degeneration of the body after death is the consequence of “original sin,” and Mary, as “immaculately conceived,” is exempted from the post-mortem decay of the body. 2) As receiver of the fullness of grace and holiness because she is

mother of Jesus and co-redeemer with Him, Mary's place is with her son, God's Son, Jesus, the Redeemer, in the abode of holiness, Heaven.

Life messages: 1) As Mary's Assumption was a reward for a holy life, this feast invites us to keep our bodies pure and holy. Paul gives three additional reasons: a) our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, b) our body parts are the members of Christ's Body, and c) our bodies are to be glorified on the day of the Last Judgment. 2) We are given an assurance of hope in our resurrection and a source of inspiration during moments of despair and temptations. 3) We receive a message of total liberation from all our bondages: impure, unjust and uncharitable thoughts, desires, words and actions, addiction to evil habits, drugs, alcohol and gambling, pornography and sexual aberrations.

Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Aug 15, 2017)

(Rv 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10ab; I Cor 15:20-27a; Lk 1:39-56) **OK!**

Anecdote: # 1: **Taj Mahal:** The Taj Mahal has been described as a "love song in marble." Completed in 1645, the magnificent marble mausoleum was built by Shah Jahan, India's Mogul emperor, in memory of his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal (= "the chosen one of the palace"). Her maiden name was Princess Arjumand. Shah Jahan loved her deeply, calling her his "Taj Mahal," meaning "The Pearl of the Palace." But Princess Mumtaz Mahal died giving birth to their fourteenth child, and the emperor was inconsolable. So, he summoned a great architect from Persia to build the Taj Mahal, telling him that it must be "the one perfect memorial in the world." Seventeen years were needed to build this enchanting edifice of gleaming white marble embroidered with flashing jewels. It is an enduring monument to love that still inspires tourists, artists and writers from all over the world. This beautiful

love story gives us some idea of how much God must have loved Mary, the mother of Jesus. Today's feast of her Assumption into Heaven is proof of this. By raising her from the dead and taking her into Heaven – body and soul – God demonstrated His undying love for Mary. Like Shah Jahan, God could not bear the death of His beloved. However, God could do what no Indian emperor could do – raise His beloved from the dead and restore her to life even more beautiful than before. Moreover, God didn't have to build a Taj Mahal to memorialize Mary. Her glorified body is itself a magnificent temple of the Holy Spirit. (Albert Cylwicki in *His Word Resounds*)

2: **Carl Jung on the Assumption:** It was in 1950, that the famed Lutheran Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, an influential thinker and the founder of *analytical psychology*, remarked that the Papal announcement of the Assumption of Mary, in 1950, was "the most important religious event since the Reformation." (Storr, p. 324). The Assumption means that, along with the glorified masculine body of Jesus in Heaven, there is also the glorified feminine body of his mother, Mary. According to Jung, "bodily reception of the Virgin into Heaven" (*Ibid.*) meant that "the Heavenly bride was united with the Bridegroom," (*Ibid.*, p. 322) which union "signifies the *hieros gamos*" [the sacred marriage], (*Ibid.*) Acknowledging that the Assumption "is vouched for neither in Scripture nor in the tradition of the first five centuries of the Christian Church," Jung observes that: "the Papal declaration made a reality of what had long been condoned. This irrevocable step beyond the confines of historical Christianity is the strongest proof of the autonomy of archetypal images." (Storr, p. 297). Jung remarks that "the Protestant standpoint . . . is obviously out of touch with the tremendous archetypal happenings in the psyche of the individual and the masses, and with the symbols which are intended to compensate the truly apocalyptic world situation today."

(*Ibid.*, pp. 322-323) Jung added: “Protestantism has obviously not given sufficient attention to the signs of the times which point to the equality of women. But this equality requires to be metaphysically anchored in the figure of a 'divine' woman. . . . The feminine, like the masculine, demands an equally personal representation.” (*Ibid.*, p. 325) [Quotes from: Jung, C. G. *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, translated by W. S. Dell and C. F. Baynes (Princeton, New Jersey: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers; San Diego, CA: 1933); and Storr, Anthony, ed., *The Essential Jung* (Princeton University Press, 1983).]

3: **Like is attracted to like.** Such attraction continues to take place every day, even though we may not always be aware of it. People who have similar likes, interests, and goals are drawn to one another. This is the reason why there are fraternities and sororities, why there are country club people, Rotarians, Masons, Knights of Columbus, Knights of Peter Claver, and Daughters of the American Revolution. They all have things in common which draw them together. That is why we also have the Ku Klux Klan, street gangs and the Mafia. Like is attracted to like. Ever notice how children follow along after their mothers? From one room to another, they tag along. And the more they are near their mothers, the more they become like them. They begin thinking, acting, and being like their mothers. We all have in common a very special mother we are honoring today. We have been drawn here together to honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, and our mother too, as we recall Mary's Assumption into Heaven. If like is attracted to like, does that mean we try to emulate her virtues and imitate her by learning more about her, by honoring her and by celebrating her feasts? (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

Introduction: The Feast of the Assumption is one of the most important feasts of our Lady. Catholics believe in the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. We believe that when her earthly life was finished, Mary was taken up, body and

soul, into Heavenly glory, where the Lord exalted her as Queen of Heaven. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, # 966). The Assumption is the feast of Mary's total liberation from death and decay, the consequences of original sin. It is also the remembrance of the day on which the Church gave official recognition to the centuries-old belief of Christians about the Assumption of their Heavenly mother. The feast was celebrated under various names (Commemoration, Dormition, Passing, Assumption) from at least the fifth or sixth century. In the Orthodox Church, the *koimesis*, or *dormitio* ("falling asleep"), of the Virgin began to be commemorated on August 15 in the 6th century. The observance gradually spread to the West, where it became known as the feast of the Assumption. By the 13th century, the belief had been accepted by most Catholic theologians, and the Assumption of Mary was a popular subject with Renaissance and Baroque painters. It was on November 1, 1950, that, through the Apostolic Constitution *Munificentimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII officially declared the Assumption as a Dogma of Catholic Faith. On this important feast day, we try to answer two questions: 1) What is meant by "Assumption?" 2) Why do we believe in Mary's Assumption into Heaven, despite the fact that there is no reference to it in the Bible? "Assumption" means that after her death, Mary was taken into Heaven, both body and soul, as a reward for her sacrificial cooperation in the Divine plan of Salvation. "On this feast day, let us thank the Lord for the gift of the Mother, and let us pray to Mary to help us find the right path every day" (Pope Benedict XVI).

Exegesis: Scripture on Mary's death and Assumption. Although there is no direct reference to Mary's death and Assumption in the New Testament, two cases of assumption are mentioned in the Old Testament, namely, those of Enoch (Gn 5:24) and the prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 2:1). These references support the possibility of Mary's Assumption. The possibility of bodily assumption is also

indirectly suggested by Matthew 27:52-53 and I Cor 15:23-24. In his official declaration of the dogma, Pope Pius XII also cites the Scriptural verses Ps 131:8, Sg 3:6, Rv 12, Is 61:13 and Sg 8:5. “Although the New Testament does not explicitly affirm Mary’s Assumption, it offers a basis for it because it strongly emphasized the Blessed Virgin’s perfect union with Jesus’ destiny. This union, which is manifested, from the time of the Savior’s miraculous conception, in the Mother’s participation in her Son’s mission and especially in her association with his redemptive sacrifice, cannot fail to require a continuation after death. Perfectly united with the life and saving work of Jesus, Mary shares his Heavenly destiny in body and soul. There are, thus, passages in Scripture that resonate with the Assumption, even though they do not spell it out” (Pope St. John II).

Tradition on Mary’s Assumption: The first trace of belief in the Virgin’s Assumption can be found in the apocryphal accounts entitled *Transitus Mariae* [Latin; “The Crossing Over of Mary”], whose origin dates to the second and third centuries. These are popular and sometimes romanticized depictions, which in this case, however, pick up an intuition of Faith on the part of God’s People. (Pope St. John Paul II). The fact of Mary’s death is generally accepted by the Church Fathers and theologians and is expressly affirmed in the liturgy of the Church. Origen (died AD 253), St. Jerome (died AD 419) and St. Augustine (died AD 430), among others, argue that Mary’s death was not a punishment for sin, but only the result of her being a descendant of Adam and Eve. In May 1946, with the Encyclical *Deiparae Virginis Mariae*, Pius XII called for a broad consultation, inquiring among the Bishops and, through them, among the clergy and the People of God as to the possibility and opportuneness of defining the bodily Assumption of Mary as a dogma of Faith. The result was extremely positive: only six answers out of 1,181 showed any reservations about the revealed character of this truth. (Pope St. John

Paul II). When Pope Pius XII made the proclamation on November 1, 1950, he put into words a belief already held by the faithful for over 1500 years. In AD 325, the Council of Nicaea spoke of the Assumption of Mary. Writing in AD 457, the Bishop of Jerusalem said that when Mary's tomb was opened, it was "found empty. The apostles judged her body had been taken into Heaven."

Pope Pius XII based his declaration of the Assumption on both tradition and theology. The uninterrupted tradition in the Eastern Churches starting from the first century, the apocryphal first century book, *Transitus Mariae*, and the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, such as St. Gregory and St. John Damascene, supported and promoted the popular belief in the Assumption of Mary. There is a tomb at the foot of the Mt. of Olives where ancient tradition says that Mary was laid. But there is nothing inside. There are no relics, as there are with the other saints. This is acceptable negative evidence of Mary's Assumption. In addition, credible apparitions of Mary, though not recorded in the New Testament, have been recorded from the 3rd century till today.

In his decree on the Dogma of the Assumption, Pope Pius XII gives four theological reasons to support this traditional belief.

#1: The degeneration or decay of the body after death is the result of original sin. However, since, through a special intervention of God, Mary was born without original sin, it is not proper that God would permit her body to degenerate in the tomb. In other words, at the first moment of her life, by a very special privilege of God, Mary was preserved free from the stain of sin. At the last moment, by another very special privilege she was preserved free from the corruption of the grave.

#2: Since Mary was given the fullness of grace, Heaven is the proper place for this sinless mother of Jesus. Hence, unlike other saints, Our Lady is in Heaven not only with her soul but also with her glorified body.

#3: Mary was our *co-redeemer, or fellow-redeemer*, with Christ in a unique sense. Hence, her rightful place is with Christ our Redeemer in Heavenly glory. (**The term co-redeemer** or co-redemptrix means "cooperator with the Redeemer." This is what St. Paul meant when he said, "*We are God's co-workers*" I Cor 3:9.). Hence, it is "fitting" that she should be given the full effects of the Redemption, the glorification of the soul and the body.

#4: In the Old Testament, we read that the prophet Elijah was taken into Heaven in a fiery chariot. Thus, it appears natural and possible that the mother of Jesus would also be taken into Heaven. The Mother of God was conceived without original sin. Consequently, she did not have to wait, like the rest of us, for the resurrection on the last day.

Scripture readings of the day: The first and third readings are about women and God's creative, redemptive and salvific action through them. The Book of Revelation, written in symbolic language familiar to the early Christians, was meant to encourage them and bolster their Faith during times of persecution. **In the first reading**, the author of Revelation probably did not have Mary of Nazareth in mind when he described the "woman" in this narrative. He uses the "woman" as a symbol for the nation and people, Israel. She is pictured as giving birth, as Israel brought forth the Messiah through its pains. The woman is also symbolic of the Church, and the woman's offspring represents the way the Church brings Christ into the world. The dragon represents the world's resistance to Christ and the truths that the Church proclaims. As Mary is the mother of Christ and of

the Church, the passage has indirect reference to Mary. (*Navarre Bible Commentary*: *The description of the woman indicates her heavenly glory, and the twelve stars of her victorious crown symbolize the people of God—the twelve patriarchs (cf. Gen 37:9) and the twelve apostles. And so, independently of the chronological aspects of the text, the Church sees in this heavenly woman the Blessed Virgin, "taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, when her earthly life was over, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords (cf. Rv 19:16) and conqueror of sin and death" (Lumen Gentium 59).*

The second reading, taken from I Corinthians, is Paul's defense of the resurrection of the dead, an apt selection on the feast of our Heavenly Mother's Assumption into Heaven. In 1 Cor 15:20 Paul speaks of Christ's resurrection as the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. Since Mary is closely associated with all the mysteries of Jesus' life, it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit has led the Church to believe in Mary's share in his glorification. In the *Magnificat*, or song of Mary, given in today's Gospel, Mary declares, "*the Almighty has done great things for me; Holy is His Name.*" Besides honoring her as Jesus' mother, God has blessed Mary with the gift of bodily Assumption. God, who has "lifted up" His "lowly servant," Mary, lifts up all the lowly, not only because they are faithful, but also because God is faithful to the promise of Divine mercy. Thus, the feast of the Assumption celebrates the mercy of God or the victory of God's mercy as expressed in Mary's *Magnificat*.

Life messages: #1: Mary's Assumption gives us the assurance and hope of our own resurrection and assumption into Heaven on the day of our Last Judgment. It is a sign to us that someday, through God's grace and our good life, we, too, will

join the Blessed Mother in giving glory to God. It points the way for all followers of Christ who imitate Mary's fidelity and obedience to God's will.

#2: Since Mary's Assumption was a reward for her saintly life, this feast reminds us that we, too, must be pure and holy in body and soul, since our bodies will be glorified on the day of our resurrection. St. Paul tells us that our bodies are the temples of God because the Holy Spirit dwells within us. He also reminds us that our bodies are members (parts) of the Body of Christ.

#3: This feast also gives us the message of total liberation. Jesus tells us (Jn 8:34) that every one who sins is a slave of sin, and St. Paul reminds us (Gal 5:1), that, since Christ has set us free, we should be slaves of sin no more. Thus, the Assumption encourages us to work with God to be liberated from the bondage of evil: from impure, unjust and uncharitable thoughts and habits, and from the bonds of jealousy, envy and hatred.

#4: Finally, it is always an inspiring thought in our moments of temptation and despair to remember that we have a powerful Heavenly Mother, constantly interceding for us before her Son, Jesus, in Heaven. The feast of Mary's Assumption challenges us to imitate her self-sacrificing love, her indestructible Faith and her perfect obedience.

Therefore, on this feast day of our Heavenly Mother, let us offer ourselves on the altar and pray for her special care and loving protection in helping us lead a purer and holier life.

JOKES OF THE WEEK 1) Miss Holycheek, the Catholic Sunday school teacher, had just finished explaining the feast of the Assumption to her class. "Now," she said, "let all those children who want to go to Heaven to see their Heavenly Mother

raise their hands." All the children raised their hands except little Marie in the front row. "Don't you want to go to Heaven, Marie?" asked Miss Holycheek. "I can't," said Marie tearfully. "My mother told me to come straight home after Sunday school

2) God is walking around Heaven one day, and notices a number of people on the Heavenly streets who shouldn't be there. He finds St. Peter at the gate and says to him, "Peter, you've been remiss in your duties. You're letting in the wrong sort of people." "Don't blame me, Lord," replies Peter. "I turn them away just like You said to. Then they go around to the back door and Jesus' mother lets them in."

Spiritual practices dedicated to Mary: Mary Ford-Grabowsky in *Spiritual Writings on Mary: Annotated and Explained* offers these spiritual practices dedicated to Mary:

- "Begin any kind of activity with a prayer to Jesus through Mary: a meal, a task of work, an exam, an athletic event, a doctor's appointment, a difficult meeting, and each time you leave the house or return.
- "Set time aside to listen to songs, chants, or classical compositions written about Mary. Try chanting yourself.
- "Create your own Mary mantra, a Mary prayer composed of only a few words, such as 'Mary, Mother of us all, give me strength' (or wisdom, patience, generosity — whatever spiritual gift you need in the moment.) Also, 'Mary, be with my friend (add name). Or simply, 'I love you,' or 'Thank you.' The possibilities are endless.
- "Honor Mary as the Mother of God by meditating on her words, virtues, and actions; and by contemplating what is great about her.

- "Perform acts of love for her without expectations of praise or a reward."

1) "Why do they minimize your beauty?" A charming story is told of the nineteenth century Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes fame. Contemporary artists were anxious for her to describe the woman she had seen in the grotto. So, one after the other, they showed her the most famous pictures of Mary. The young Bernadette was shown the beautiful Madonnas done by Murillo, Da Vinci, Raphael, Botticelli, El Greco, etc. To each she shook her head in disappointment. To their surprise, she said, "The lady looks like none of these paintings." To herself she said, "My mother, why do they minimize your beauty?" (Fr. James)

2) The "bowing Procession:" In a small town in the hills surrounding Rome, the Feast of the Assumption is celebrated with what's called the "bowing procession." From one end of the town, the townspeople process, carrying a statue of the Virgin Mary. From the other end of the town, another group of townspeople march into town, carrying a statue of Jesus. Mary's Son comes to rendezvous with His Mother. In front of the parish church, the two groups meet. A ton of flowers decorates the church. Jesus and His Mother solemnly bow to each other. The villagers carry the statues of Mary and her Son side by side into the Church. It's God the Son leading his Mother to her throne in heaven.

3) Body, soul or both: Today's feast also shows us that God values our bodies. They are not only important to Him. They are sacred! There are two extremes of thought in regard to our bodies. One considers the body as our number one treasure. Ads and commercials usually feature people with exceptional looks. To be successful, accepted, and loved, they tell us, depends upon how we look. We are to watch our weight, keep in shape, and smell just right. If we don't pamper our bodies and treat them royally, we'll be social, business, and sexual flops. Nobody

will want us around. As for the importance of our soul and our spiritual life? Forget it! They consider such things nonexistent and absurd. The other extreme of thought about the body is to look upon it as merely a machine for us to operate in this world. Its value is only its usefulness. To enhance it with cosmetics and perfume, to dress it up and make it look attractive, to diet, exercise, and look at it in the mirror - all that is not only a waste of time, but sinful. The soul and its spiritual condition are all that is important for us. We are to think of our body only when necessity requires. But God is telling us on this feast of the Assumption that to Him, both are important - our body and our soul. They are both to be valued, and they are to be given the attention and honor due them. (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

4) “God helps those who help themselves.” If you are watching television and want a dish of ice cream, you aren’t going to have any unless you get up, go to the kitchen and scoop it up yourself. If you are in a movie theater and decide you want some popcorn, you aren’t going to get any unless you go to the lobby and buy it. Or are you one of those people who have someone waiting on them hand and foot? Are you one of those capable people, by that I mean one who is not an invalid, who nevertheless expect to be waited on when they want something? Well, if you are, I’ve got some shocking news for you. That sort of thing is not going to work with God. I’m sure you’ve heard this one before: “God helps those who help themselves.” By that is meant not the selfish and self-centered. What is meant by “God helps those who help themselves,” is that, for those who try to do their duty, who try to help others, who try to live the teachings of Christ, God will take it from there and perfect the results of their efforts, if not here, at least in the next life. The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, spent her earthly life trying to carry out the will of God. Her Son crowned her efforts by drawing her

into Heaven with Himself, and perfecting her body into the likeness of His. Thus we say, Mary was assumed into heaven. (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

5) “Why did you go to Church today?” someone might ask us. “This isn’t Sunday, it’s only Tuesday.” “It’s a holy day of obligation. The feast of the Assumption,” we answer. “Oh,” the person says, and might add, “What’s that?” Most Catholics won’t be questioned about today’s feast. Many Catholics might not even remember it. But you and I do. We have come to Mass to celebrate it. And we know why we are here. Mary, the Mother of God, was assumed body and soul into Heaven by her Son Jesus Christ where she was crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth. (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

6) “WHY ME?” Ever ask yourself that question? Or voice it to someone else. “Why me? Why did this happen to me?” If and when we ever do say, “Why me?” is it not usually in regard to something very unpleasant that has happened to us? “Why is it that my car had to be the one to find the nail in the road? I’ve had my motel reservations for four months and when I get there, they can’t find my name in the computer. And why, after three weeks of dry, sunny, wonderful weather, did it have to pick my vacation week to rain? Why does the worst always happen to me?” Have you ever thought of saying “Why me?” when something really good happens to you? When the love of your life loves you back, when you get a raise in salary, when the bathing suit you bought five years ago still fits you perfectly, or when the cat goes outside to throw up instead of using your living room rug? “Why me? Why should such wonderful things happen to me? Why am I being treated so well?” That is just what Mary is probably asking God today. “Why is it I am the one you have taken up into Heaven body and soul with such great glory?” (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

7) **"I'm talking to your mother."** There is an old story about a workman on scaffolding high above the nave of a cathedral who looked down and saw a woman praying before a statue of Mary. As a joke, the workman whispered, "Woman, this is Jesus." The woman ignored him. The workman whispered again, more loudly: "Woman, this is Jesus." Again, the woman ignored him. Finally, he said aloud, "Woman, don't you hear me? This is Jesus." At this point the woman looked up at the crucifix and said, "Be still now, Jesus, I'm talking to your mother." (Fr. Munachi E. Ezeogu).

8) **Chair-lift to Eggstocke Mountain.** In Braunwald, Switzerland, there is, or at least was, a chair-lift that can make even the bravest person a bit weak-kneed. This lift is called the Sesselbahn. It is a system of overhead cables attached to high supports built into the rocky slopes of the Eggstocke Mountain. On these cables, chairs are hung which are electrically caused to slide up the cables carrying provisions and people to the Ortstock Haus on the top. Two chairs hang side by side. They are similar to ordinary metal ones with a kind of sunshade over them. There is no protection of any kind, just two chairs dangling in the air with only a narrow footrest, no sides or backs other than a couple of bars. The person with nerve enough to get into one of these chairs is, in the words of the article, "swung up over fearsome abysses and up the face of a mighty rock precipice by invisible power." Sounds like a risky ride. But many people have gotten into those chairs and made it safely to the top and down again. No accidents were ever reported. But it seems to me that to ride the Sesselbahn chair-lift is to have great Faith in a manmade device. Probably we trust manmade things more than we trust in God. What do you think? Today we celebrate the Assumption of Mary into Heaven. Mary allowed herself and her life to rest completely in the hands of God. She did what she thought He wanted her to do, and she trusted that He would take her

through to the end and bring her out safe and sound. We could say she got into one of God's chairs, let God accompany her in the one next to hers, and up they went - all the way over and through the dangers of life and into Heaven. That takes great Faith. (Fr. Jack Dorsel)

9) Stretch out your frying pan: Two men went fishing. One man was an experienced fisherman; the other wasn't. Every time the experienced fisherman caught a big fish, he put it in his ice chest to keep it fresh. Whenever the inexperienced fisherman caught a big fish, he threw it back. The experienced fisherman watched this go on all day and finally got tired of seeing this man waste good fish. "Why do you keep throwing back all the big fish you catch?" he asked. The inexperienced fisherman replied, "I only have a small frying pan." Sometimes, like that fisherman, we throw back the big plans, big dreams, big ideas, and big opportunities that God sends us, because our Faith is too small. We laugh at that fisherman who didn't figure out that all he needed was a bigger frying pan; yet how ready are we to increase the size of our Faith? God has big hopes for us - Assumption-sized hopes. Seeing how His hopes for the Blessed Virgin Mary were so wonderfully fulfilled should help increase our Faith. It should stretch out our frying pan. As the angel Gabriel said to Mary long before her glorious Assumption, "nothing is impossible to God" (Lk 1:37). [Frying pan story adapted from Hot Illustrations, copyright 2001, Youth Specialties, Inc. (E- Priest)]

10) Mary Is Our Star of Hope: In pre-Christian times, the pagan religions of ancient Greece and Rome had a very interesting insight into the human soul. Some of their myths described how great heroes from past ages used to do battle with the gods, either physically or through a contest of wits. And when a human being won such a battle, one's reward would be to avoid death and Hell (there was no belief in Heaven) by being turned into a constellation of stars in the night sky. By

becoming a constellation, one achieved a kind of immortality, because the divine stars, so the people thought, never change. In that way, one also would inspire and guide future generations, because the stars were used to guide ocean navigation before the invention of the compass. This charming ancient sentiment was purely mythological and legendary, but it appealed to artists and poets for many centuries. It seemed to be in harmony with a basic human instinct, the instinct for Heaven, and they felt the need for help to get there. When Christianity came around, this image from pagan poetry found its true fulfillment. The Blessed Virgin Mary, a human being just like you and me, conquered evil with the help of God's grace, through her humility and obedience undoing the ancient sin of Eve. And God rewarded her by assuming her, lifting her, into Heaven. And from Heaven, she is an inspiration and guide for us who are still traveling through the troubled waters of life on earth. And so from very early times, the Church began to call Mary the "Star of the Sea", "Stella Maris" [STELL-uh MAHR-ess] in Latin. [Adapted from Pope Benedict XVI. (E- Priest)]