

The Feast of the Assumption of our Lady

Around 135 AD the emperor Hadrian tried to remove the memory of the holy city of Jerusalem by making it a pagan city honouring Jupiter. Around 200 years later the emperor Constantine (285-387AD), restored it as a holy city. In 336 AD the Church of Holy Sepulchre was rebuilt together with other holy places and restored the memories of the life of our Lord.

One of the memories was about the Mother of Jesus centred on 'the tomb of Mary', close to Mount Zion, where early Christians lived. On this Mount was a 'place of the Dormition of Mary'- 'falling asleep'- and close to it was her tomb.

Here the memory of the Dormition was celebrated, which later became the Feast of her Assumption. This was initially celebrated in Palestine, later it was extended to all the churches of the East. In the seventh century it was celebrated in Rome under the title: "Dormitio"(Falling asleep).

At the council of Calcidon, the emperor Marcian asked the Patriarch of Jerusalem to bring the relics of the Mother of God, but the Patriarch explained that there were no relics of Mother Mary in Jerusalem. And he said that 'Mary had died in the presence of the Apostles, but her tomb, when opened later, was found empty. And hence the Apostles concluded that the body was taken up to heaven'.

St. John Damascene (8th Cent.) expressed the meaning of the Feast thus: "Although the body of Mary was duly buried, it did not remain in the state of death, neither was it decayed. She was transferred into her heavenly home".

The Assumption completes the work of God in Mary, the Mother of God, since it was not fitting that the flesh that had given

life to God Himself should ever undergo corruption. The Assumption is the crown of God's work in Mary as she ends her earthly life and enters eternity. The Feast helps us to turn our eyes in that direction, where we will one day follow her when our earthly life is over. On November 1st 1950, Pope Pius the XII proclaimed the Assumption of Mary as a dogma of the Catholic Church: "The Immaculate Mother of God, the ever Virgin Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life was assumed body and soul into heaven".

Pius Parsch in his book, 'The Church's year of Grace' writes: 'Now towards the end of summer season, at a time when the fruits are ripe in the gardens and fields, the Church celebrates the most glorious 'harvest festival' in the Communion of Saints. Mary, the supremely blessed one among women, again Mary, the most precious fruit which has ripened in the fields of God's kingdom, is today taken into the granary of heaven'.

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