



19 August 1881

On The Mystery of the Assumption

Saint Marie Eugenie of Jesus

My dear daughters,

You asked me to speak about the mystery of the Assumption which is a difficult subject, I will say a little however, which may help your devotion.

You know that when Our Lord was on earth He was a wayfarer, but at the same time He was all-knowing. As the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, He was seated in heaven governing the world and reigning in the beauty of His divinity. His humanity, united with the Word of God enjoyed by right, the beatific vision. This was confined to the uttermost part of His soul and did not touch His humanity so as a consequence. He could suffer, agonize, be abandoned and spend His life in a humble state and hide the glory of His humanity from men. He allowed this glory to show at the Transfiguration, for just a moment. Apart from this His great glory remained hidden.

Something similar occurred for the Blessed Virgin. From the time of the Incarnation she had an understanding of God far superior and intimate to any of the saints. At the time she suffered intensely and merited the title of “Queen of martyrs.” She suffered more than any martyr during the Passion on Calvary where she saw Our Lord suffer and die. God as it were, withheld the joy her understanding of Him gave her. As St. Francis of Sales said, “it was hidden in the fine point of her soul,” where she experience God and was united with Him. It is this we must imitate in the Blessed Virgin. The lower part of our soul may be filled with suffering, sorrow, anxiety and sadness. Our Lord suffered this, “He began to feel fear and desolation.” We will experience all this but like the Blessed Virgin and the saints we must try to keep in our inmost soul the experience of and union with God.

Our Lady longed to see God. This is the cause of her death, of her glorious Assumption and is a mystery she already possessed within her, namely, the God whom she desired. Yet this possession was not as intense as it would be after her death. This was the union she desired, a union we should all long for it unceasingly.

The Blessed Virgin desired this infinite good. It finally possessed her whole being. Because her desire was so ardent it transformed all her actions and her body itself was filled with this plenitude and God willed her to be raised to heaven. Her pure body was ready for glory while ours, with its imperfections and impurities will need a long transformation before we can finally possess God in eternity.

The principle of this desire in the Blessed Virgin was her complete understanding of God. What creature has known God as she did? She understood the holiness, beauty, force, power and complete perfection of God. He is beyond our conception. It is always by negation that we name Him. He is infinite, otherwise, not finite; immeasurable, or not be measured, incomprehensible, or not understandable. All these titles and affirmations we give to Him show us how much He is above and beyond all our conceptions of Him.

The Blessed Virgin has lights which increased her desires. The more she desired God, the more she understood Him and the more she longed to enjoy Him and her Son, her infinite good. Her desire to see her Son and to be near Him was stimulated by her great love. Her desire was caused both by her knowledge and her love. Who can speak fittingly of the love Mary felt for God and the love she felt for Jesus? It was so intense, so ardent, great than that of all the Seraphim and Cherubim, and caused the ripe fruit to fall from the tree, as it were, and so the soul of Mary was detached from her body and then reunited because Jesus Christ called her to share His throne in heaven. This is what we mean by the mystery of the Assumption.

There are consequences to draw from all this. First, we should have a very pure desire to know and love God. We should seek to know and love Him more ardently and with a purified desire. I do not think that in spite of her great sorrows, the Blessed Virgin ever complained of them. Her life on earth was one of union with God and charity towards others. It should be the same for us. In the things that weigh on us, and in the things we suffer we should never be turned from the cross, that we are sure to encounter in some way or another. Since we are disciples of Jesus Christ we should never try to avoid crosses or suffering. We should accept all our difficulties wholeheartedly and willingly. We must present a smiling visage to them, a face covered with honey to offer to the bees whose stings are unpleasant, said St. Francis de Sales.

The crosses, thorns and difficulties of this world are far from agreeable. If we accept them they become “Blessed Crosses”, as they were for St. Andrew for they lead us to heaven. They will become dear to us and give us peace. As I have so often said to you, these things should not pre-occupy us for they serve to test and sanctify us. Cardinal Berulle says exactly the same thing in a sentence I often quote, “The crosses are not meant to pre-occupy us but to test and sanctify us. The Son of God who has come to us, should be our sole occupation.” If the crosses do not worry us, like Mary we will be free to desire God for what He is in Himself because of His infinite perfections. We should try to love Him above all other things. The desire to love increases love. It makes us seek Him and give us understanding.

Our motive for desiring to see God is not found in what we suffer, in what we ourselves experience, but in God Himself. We long to see His goodness, beauty and perfection. We long to see Jesus Christ, our Spouse, Son of the Blessed Virgin.

Often however, the desire for death is not good, since as St. Francis de Sales says, we must have achieved great perfection to die uniquely to see God. There is often another motive which spoils the purity of our desire. Perhaps life seems wearisome; perhaps it costs us to carry

our cross so we long to die as an escape. I have noticed something strange. Those who have desired death with impatience, as in the fable of La Fontaine, would willingly have borne their crosses when death actually overtakes them. They are often not the most detached, joyful or perfect when they are ill. We should not cultivate this desire unless we are very holy, and we can hardly judge this for ourselves.

More often, I have seen that the holiest sisters are completely abandoned into God's hands, ready to accept death or life. If God makes His will clear they accept it readily. One sister said to me on her death bed. "If God calls me can I not wish to go to Him?" This is the desire of a person whom God calls and who answers joyfully and it is a good desire. When God does not wish it nor give an indication of His will, when Extreme Unction has not been received, then the desire does not resemble that of the Blessed Virgin.

In spite of her great influence on her Son and His desire to place her on the throne He had prepared for her in heaven, and to crown her as Queen of the Church on earth and of the triumphant Church in eternity, Jesus still left her some years on earth and she submitted completely.

I do not believe she ever asked God to shorten her life. She waited for the hour decided by His will and she said, as at the Annunciation, "I am the little handmaid of the Lord." However her ever-increasing loving desire, her greater understanding of God's divine perfections meant she was always tending towards heaven.

She understood all Jesus Christ means for His redeemed creatures and for her own redemption at the moment of her Immaculate Conception. Her whole being longed to be united with her divine Son and this desire grew continuously. From the moment of her birth her love was far greater than our poor weak love. One can say of her what the Church says in the psalms. "Her foundations are established on the holy mountain."¹ Her perfection began where that of the saints ended. When she was a tiny child in her mother's arms, her love was already far greater than our feeble love. Think what this ever-growing love must have been at the moment of her glorious Assumption.

Let us try to desire God, to know and love Him to know and love Jesus Christ with an evermore patient and submissive love.

Let us be ready to suffer for the love of God, in union with His will, only desiring that His good pleasure be accomplished in us. Let us seek to do His will so perfectly and completely in this life that after death we may receive the glory we hope for, which will ensure that our bodies too will be glorified on the final Resurrection day.



The Historical Situation

¹ Ps. 86, 3

This meditation on the mystery of the Assumption could conclude this series of chapters retained because it presents the spirit of the Assumption in a special manner. Among a number of Chapters on the Virgin Mary this is the only one with this title.

In “The Introduction to the Constitutions”, Abbe Combalot speaks of the mystery of the Assumption. Mother Marie Eugenie recalls it in her first notes and in her last letters. Thus in a letter to Father d’Alzon, 15 August 1846 (Vol. IX – No. 1757) she writes:

-- “I sought to apply myself to contemplate the feelings of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin in the mystery of the Assumption. I was above all, struck by the extreme humility of the Blessed Virgin, the humility of her love which made the background of all that most attracted Jesus Christ to her. I remember her life, so hidden, so obedient, so devoted, this love which had nothing of self in it, which was always effaced behind Jesus and was never anxious about even the hard things related in the Gospels, because she did not look at herself, and forgetful of all else, she loved without considering anything but Jesus Christ... It seemed to me that it is only God ... whom one can love so ...

.... Finally, the contemplation of this soul, so sweet, humble, absorbed by God, simple and detached, did me more good than all other prayer.”

She gave an instruction on the ‘spirit of the Assumption’ 14 December 1873. Then came the series of fourteen chapters on this subject in 1878. The one of 24 February presented Mary in “the mystery of the Assumption, mystery of adoration.”

In 1881, forty-two years after the foundation, on the fortieth anniversary of the first profession in the “newborn Institute”, the subject was taken up again at the request of the sisters. “A difficult subject”: “I can only say a few words about it”; “they may perhaps inspire you with devotion.” IN reality, these “few words” cover about ten pages in the printed volume of the Chapters. There is no trace in the archives of a written copy of this text, but the printed one has a note: “Read and corrected by Notre Mere.”

A summary of the Chapter

- This meditation starts from the contemplation of Our Lord during his mortal life, his humanity united with the Word of God, then it stops to consider the Blessed Virgin and her union with God. We can find our model in her.
- The Mystery of the Assumption is the fulfillment of the immense desire of Mary to see God. “It was this love that caused the ripe fruit to fall.”
- Consequences to draw: a very pure desire to know God to love Him and to see Him.
- A reflection on the death “of the holiest sisters² who following Mary, longed for God with an ever increasing desire.
- A final counsel: “to be her daughters, try to desire God and to be Him,... Desiring only that God’s good pleasure is accomplished in us... perfectly... fully.”

² In August 1881, there were already 74 sisters who had died since the foundation.

