"First saturdays of the Month" Meditation: Nov. 7, 2026

4th Glorious Mystery: The Assumption

Fruit of the Mystery: The grace of a good death

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We can observe that after Pentecost, the Scriptures say nothing more about the Blessed Virgin's earthly life. A similar silence surrounds the first appearance of the Risen Christ to His Mother. These moments belong to God alone, and He has chosen not to reveal them to us explicitly. Thus, the circumstances of the Assumption have remained shrouded in a degree of mystery. But, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church has deepened its understanding of Revelation through the teachings of the Doctors of the Church, the saints, and the popes.



Thus, the feast of the Assumption was celebrated as early as the sixth century. In France, this devotion reached its peak on February 10, 1638, when King Louis XIII consecrated the Kingdom of France to the Blessed Virgin and made August 15 a national feast day. Finally, on November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII crowned this faith, handed down over the centuries, and proclaimed ex cathedra, in the Apostolic Constitution **Munificentissimus Deus**, the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, body and soul, solemnly invoking his papal infallibility.

The dogma, however, does not specify the exact circumstances of the end of the Blessed Virgin's earthly life. Did she die? How did it happen? The Doctors of the Church and the saints who have addressed this question are almost unanimous: the Blessed Virgin experienced death—a conviction widely shared by Catholics and Orthodox Christians. St. John of Damascus (8th century), cited in **Munificentissimus Deus**, St. Germain of Constantinople, St. Modestus of Jerusalem, St. Gregory of Tours, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Alphonsus Liguori have written on this, explaining why.

Saint Augustine emphasizes: *"Since Scripture makes no mention of either her death or her Assumption, we must seek in reason what, in this regard, seems to us most in accordance with the truth; for authority has no value without truth. "When, therefore, I consider the human condition, I do not hesitate to affirm that the Blessed Virgin underwent temporal death."*

Let us, then, contemplate the mystery of the Blessed Virgin's death in the light of the teachings of the saints and the great preachers. As part of the devotion to the First Saturdays of the month—when Mary promises to assist us at the hour of our death—what could be more beautiful than meditating on the way in which our Heavenly Mother herself experienced death?

According to Tradition, the Blessed Virgin lived for about twenty years after Pentecost. We know very little about this period, as Bishop Charles Gay points out in his essay on the Assumption: *"The Virgin rarely appeared in public; she did not teach on her own; at the very least, we can say that she never did so publicly." "* As she had always done, Mary lived in deep contemplation, leading a life of prayer in union with her Son. *"God could not have been better adored or more loved by a pure creature. Everything in her was brought to its highest point. (…) Every second saw a new world of love and holiness—unknown until then—bloom from her ever-growing union with God. (…) She called upon God; God called upon her; she waited; God waited for her."* (Bishop C. G., p. 378)

The Eucharist was certainly the high point of each of her days. With what perfection must she have received Holy Communion! She who had carried Jesus in her womb for nine months now carried Him within her once more, in a union of heart with Him that is impossible to describe.

Yet this contemplation did not isolate her. She was the Mother of the nascent Church. Disciples and apostles consulted her, and many came to receive graces and support from her. *"Those—and there were many—who had had the good fortune to know Jesus were, upon seeing her, consoled by his absence; and those who had not known him could still contemplate him in his Mother. "* As long as she remained on earth, the Blessed Virgin was the heart of the nascent Church: *"It is the common belief of the Church that she held the place of honor at the first council, which was that of Jerusalem."* (Bishop C. G., p. 367)

Then came the day of her death. A question arises here: why did She who was the Immaculate Conception experience death, the punishment for original sin? We can offer several answers:

Union with her Son who died on the Cross. Since the Blessed Virgin was in perfect union with Jesus on Calvary, how could we imagine that she would have wanted to escape what He had experienced? Out of love, she could only have desired to live through and offer that moment in union with Him.

The humility of death. Mary, the model of humility, could not have desired a different treatment from that of all her children. Despite the graces with which God had showered her, she did not seek to derive privileges for herself from them. On the contrary, she responded to these gifts from God with her immense humility, and since death is the summit of humility, she ardently desired it.

Queen of Martyrs. The death of the martyrs, freely endured for God*, "is the masterpiece of charity, and that heroic witness we call martyrdom. (…) What, then, is it for the one who embraces it? The final likeness to Jesus, the fulfillment of her supernatural beauty, the sacred seal of her virtues, her inalienable right to beatitude. But if this is true of the death of all the saints, what must the death of Mary be, who is so incomparably superior to them? "* (Bishop C. G., p. 374) As Queen of Martyrs, the Blessed Virgin was also to be their model in death.

The Blessed Virgin's Assistance at Our Death. The Blessed Virgin has promised to assist us at the moment of our death if we fulfill her request regarding the First Saturdays. How could She have wished to refuse death and thus deprive us of the perfect example of a good death, She who precisely wants to help us achieve it? A mother shows her children the way and wants to share in their trials.

But God set limits on Mary's death by preserving her from the physical consequences associated with sin. Just as she had not experienced the pains of childbirth, she did not experience pain at the hour of death nor the decay of her body. If many saints gave off a wonderful fragrance at their death, how resplendent Mary's body must have been! *"First of all, she did not die of illness or old age. Illness, the daughter of sin, could not gain a foothold in a creature more distant from evil than heaven is from hell."* (Bishop C. G., p. 376) Saint Francis de Sales teaches that the Blessed Virgin died of love.

God also allowed her to know the moment of her death, as He did for certain saints. On the morning of that day, Mary had no doubt received Holy Communion, preparing to be reunited with her Son. *"Then, emptying herself in a final act of humility, reverence, and boundless gratitude, the Virgin received permission to finally give free rein to her love by following the supreme impulse of her Heart; and, to imitate Jesus to the very end, having spoken or thought these words: 'Lord, I commend my spirit into your hands,' she passed from this world to the next, from time to eternity, from the summit of grace to the summit of glory."* (Bishop C. G., p. 376)

According to the tradition we follow here, this took place in Jerusalem. Saint John and Saint Peter were most likely present, perhaps along with other apostles. Then, after keeping vigil over her, they laid her in a tomb, just as they had done for Our Lord. *"In the Valley of Jehoshaphat, which lies between Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, stands a magnificent church dedicated to Mary; there one can still see an empty tomb where, according to common tradition, this Blessed Virgin had been buried,"* St. Jerome tells us.

It was there that, like her Son, her body likely remained until the third day. Then Our Lord came to take her resurrected body, raising his Mother to Heaven, body and soul, carried by a myriad of angels. Let us contemplate this marvelous Assumption with two saints:

"It was on this illustrious day that the Immaculate Virgin was taken up into the heights of heaven, where she sits on a throne of glory, beside her divine Son. (…) Let us therefore picture the entire heavenly court hastening to meet this Queen, surrounded by a dazzling light; amid hymns and songs of praise, she is led to the sublime place prepared for her before the creation of the world. (…) The Lord of Hosts, escorted by his victorious armies, stepped forward himself to greet his worthy Mother and honor her; and after welcoming her into his kingdom, showing her tender affection, he had her sit majestically at his right hand." Saint Jerome.

"This day of triumph and supreme joy for you, our sweet Queen, is a source of rejoicing and continual admiration for all ages; for today, not only are you filled with incomparable glory, but even heaven itself, with all that it contains, is adorned with a new glory by your presence, which increases its splendor beyond all thought and expression. When you entered this blessed abode, O illustrious Sovereign, you ennobled it through the excellence of your virtues and merits, while at the same time enriching it with the superabundance of your graces and mercies." Saint Anselm.