

Weekly Message from Fr William for the Assumption 2022

Dear People of St Mary's

The feast of the Assumption is celebrated this Sunday, transferred onto the Sunday from 15th August. Although belief in the assumption of Mary into heaven was a popular and widespread belief for many centuries, its declaration as a dogma is very recent and very new. Pope Pius XII defined it in 1950 in these words:

'We proclaim and define it to be a dogma revealed by God that the immaculate Mother of God, Mary ever virgin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into the glory of heaven.'

There are different traditions about whether Mary died and was then raised to life and assumed into heaven, or whether she was assumed into heaven without undergoing death. The phrase in the dogmatic definition 'when the course of her earthly life was finished' leaves this question open (or sits on the fence!).

The phrase – taken up 'body and soul' – also gives scope to the different Christian traditions about the relationship between body and soul, ranging from an identification between body and soul, to a fully dualistic view of two separable entities. In some eastern traditions, for example, it is held that Mary died a natural death, that her soul was received by Christ at the moment of her death, and that her body was resurrected on the third day after her death.

The dogmatic definition also gives rise to further questions such as the status of other saints and whether their status is or is not any different to this, and indeed the status of humanity in general post-death.

Whatever the different views, the Feast of the Assumption is another opportunity to celebrate a woman who has a supremely important place in our Christian spirituality and I'm sure I'll be sharing some reflections on this at Mass this Sunday.

Other things going on: Some more detail on the Old School refurbishment which I mentioned last Sunday. This mini refurbishment of The Old School is currently underway. The hall floor has been repaired, sanded and resealed and this has been followed by internal and external decoration together with some essential maintenance repairs. In an effort to control costs we have prioritised work in and around the hall itself. The project will cost just under £15,000 with £10,000 of this being provided by a National Lottery Community Fund grant, the maximum award of this type of grant.

God bless you!



Assumption, 14 August 2022