

THE BULLETIN

“So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.”

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The Assumption of Mary and Us

Adapted from a sermon by The Most Rev. Clarence Kelly
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In the 19th century there occurred an inspiring event in the Mojave Desert. The Mojave Desert is an arid region of eastern California, a part of which is known as Death Valley. At 280 feet below sea level, it is the lowest point in the United States. The summer days are very hot, often above one hundred degrees. In 1849 a group of men traveled across the Mojave Desert on their way to the coast of California. It was a perilous journey and some died. Among this group of men there was a woman, who was remarkable in many ways. Not only did she endure the journey, but she was, in great measure, responsible for the survival of the others. Many years later, the survivors of the trip decided to have a reunion in Santa Cruz, California. Among those who attended it was the woman who had saved so many. She attended even though she was by then ninety-nine years old. When they all got together, they talked about old times, and in particular, about their journey through Death Valley. They talked about the hardships they endured—the fifty-two days they trekked across the sands of the Mojave Desert—and as they talked, their thoughts and words inevitably were drawn to the woman who was among them. By common consent, they acknowledged their great debt to her. They knew that many more would have died had it not been for what she did. Many more would have perished in the desert. (Arthur Tonne, *Stories for Sermons*, vol. 1, p. 44)

What exactly did that woman do for them that caused so many to survive? What she did was to

confer upon them a spirit of perseverance. She gave them strength to continue. She raised their spirits. Without exception, they all agreed that had it not been for her faith, her cheerfulness, her goodness, and encouragement, many others would not have reached the land of the Golden Gate, “where Pacific breezes blow and blossoms . . . scent the air.” (Ibid., p. 44)

What the woman was to that group of men, Our Lady is to the human race. By her motherly cheerfulness, her encouragement, her kindness and her intercession, the Blessed Mother enables us to persevere in our journey across the desert of life to the Promised Land of Heaven, where sweet and holy breezes blow and the blossoms of the Beatific Vision of God scent the air. It is for this reason that our Blessed Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, gave her to us for this journey. Of this we are reminded on the Feast of her glorious Assumption into heaven, celebrated each year on August 15th.

On November 1, 1950, Pope Pius XII defined the dogma of the Assumption. On that day he did not speak as a theologian. He spoke as the Vicar of Christ on earth. He did not give an opinion about the Assumption. He infallibly defined it as a dogma of Faith. He did this in virtue of his Supreme Apostolic authority, as the living representative of Christ on earth. He spoke authoritatively, he spoke definitively, and what he said can never be changed, altered, or updated. This is so because the Assumption of Our Lady into heaven is, in the strictest sense of the word, a dogma of Faith. By “dogma of Faith” we mean it is