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ARISE, MY BELOVED!

The Assumption of Our Blessed Mother into heaven is a feast of consolation for us. Looking at Mary, we get a glimpse of the glory that awaits us after we have passed through death. In the Assumption, Our Lady departs from this mortal world we still inhabit. "Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come!" (Sg 2:13) Mary, of course, enters into a fullness of glory but our own will be like hers. The glory of the Mother tells us what the glory of the children will be.

Through Mary's Assumption, our human hearts are lifted up. They reach high to all the loved ones we have had to let go. Grandparents, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, husbands, wives, dear children, cherished relatives and friends—those who no longer breathe this earthly air. In the radiance of her Assumption we see all who have died in Christ and have passed into His peace without end.

This weak flesh of ours is the source of much affliction and the source, too, of temptation. But we do not reject our physical nature and its shortcomings. St. John of the Cross says, "God manifests the decrees of His wisdom; He knows how to draw good from evil so wisely and beautifully, and to ordain to a greater good what was a cause of evil" (Spiritual Canticle, St 23,# 5, p. 564, ICS edition).

In our flesh, we receive the sacraments. We eat the Body of Christ and drink His Blood in holy communion. The pangs of our bodies join us to the Passion of Jesus. No angel has a body wracked by suffering that images our crucified Savior. The flesh which tempts us is also a source of merit. Its struggles can lead us to deeper union with God. Our bodily nature calls to Christ and Mary for healing, for their purifying touch--and for that final transformation when pain is past.

The feast of the Assumption reminds us that finally the body will be beyond all distress, a source of special joy. Every suffering here below is saying to us: This will pass away but the glory it can purchase will be unending. We need to recall such a guarantee when physical agony makes us look upon the body as almost an enemy. No, this body which often costs us so much is a blessed part of our being. Every headache, every bleeding wound, every muscle spasm, the nights of insomnia, the torment of back, stomach, legs or arms are saying to us: This is only for a time. It will all turn into glory.

Growing older is a special challenge. It isn't just recognizing how our vitality is diminishing, having stiffness attack us in places so supple before. It's also because we live in a culture that applauds youth, where some of us dread the onset of a new decade. Can you remember when you turned 30 and said, "Oh, not 30!" Then it was 40. "Forty years old! Me! I never was 40 before!" Then it became 50. Half a century and onward.

The Assumption lets us know that all this is drawing us closer to eternal blessedness. When the body begins to show its age, a radiance of the spirit can increase.

My body, you are no enemy of mine. There is beauty in youth but also when youth is left behind. The loveliness of the Virgin Mary, a teenage maiden, is not the same as the beauty of Mary rejoicing in the resurrection of her Son. We look at Our Lady in her middle age. We see her later in the company of John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, as she grows older still.

Mary is Queen of the Day, the woman “clothed with the sun.” But she is also Queen of the Night; “the moon is under her feet” (Rev 12:1). She adds radiance to all our joys and is a beacon of light in the dark shadows of sorrow. She is also an image of the moon, shining with the light of her divine Son. That is why we can borrow and christianize the lovely words of the Rubaiyat and say to her: “Ah, Moon of my delight that know’st no wane” (No. 74, Edward Fitzgerald translation).

The Assumption is an event of wondrous splendor that sheds its luminous rays on us. We see the Son of God joyfully receiving His earthly mother. Together they look tenderly upon us who are Christ’s brothers and sisters. With Him, we are children of Mary. When the short day of this life has passed away, her maternal arms will welcome us. She will not sit on a throne high above us. We will be **“borne in with gladness and joy” (Ps 45:16)**. She will lift us to an embrace close to her heart.

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