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## **Chancellor's Update**

### **Advocate**

In recent years in most Western democracies it has become more difficult for Catholics and other Christians to live their faith so that they can influence the culture and promote the Kingdom of God on earth. For example, in the United States many Catholics are frustrated by a powerful Catholic legislator, who devotes herself to saving the planet, even though many of her votes cause the deaths of millions of unborn babies, who, unlike the earth, are made in the image and likeness of God. Many of her other votes promote a decline in general morality. Efforts to save the planet include searching for alternate sources of energy, which may be useful as options to current sources of energy, but if mandated, in reality will cause the elderly and those trying to earn a living to lose affordable, efficient and sustainable necessities of life. As this scenario continues with no reversal in sight, these disappointed Catholics wish they had an advocate who would understand and help them.

Such an advocate does exist. God does not abandon His own. This advocate is a familiar person of extraordinary fame and power. She was recognized as such by the earliest Christians and so honored on the feast of her falling asleep or translation. Saint Germanus in a sermon on that feast in 730 A.D. described her joy at leaving the earthly Jerusalem for the heavenly city. So the Apostles and other Christians addressed the Mother of God, the Ever-Virgin Mary. "As long as we had thee dwelling with us in this world, O Mother of God, we were comforted; for seeing thee, it was as if we were seeing the Christ Himself. Now we are filled with grief at thy departure from this life. But since by God's command, and thy own deep Mother's love, thou art eager to depart to God, we rejoice for Him that this shall be fittingly fulfilled in thee, and that it may come to pass without delay. For in thee also we have been given a pledge of eternal life, and, through thy going, in thee we gain a Mediatrix with God. Nor is it truly fitting that the Mother of God should linger here, in the midst of a generation perverse and evil, but rather that she should be translated to heavenly mansions and to heavenly joys." Saint Germanus concluded the sermon by asking Mary to be mindful of her Christian servants, to commend their petitions to God, and to pray for each of them to be delivered from the danger of damnation.

Saint John Damascene in his sermon on the Feast of the Assumption in 740 A. D. acknowledged that God is the Creator, Maker and Ruler of all things, and that because Mary is the Mother of God, she is above all creatures and is the Mistress of all that was made. Reviewing man's history, he said, "Of old the Lord God, drove from the Paradise of Eden the founders of our race, when filled with the wine of their transgression they had drugged the eye of the heart, and in the sickness that followed their sin the eyes of their mind were heavy, and held by a deadly sleep. Shall Paradise not now receive her who has struck down the attack of every evil, who has brought forth the Flower of obedience of God and of the Father, and made a beginning of Life for all men? Shall the heavens not open their gates in welcome? Beyond all

doubt. Eve gave ear to the message of the serpent, listened to the counsels of the enemy, and was caught in her senses by the assault of false and evil pleasure, incurring a sentence of pain and grief; so that she must *bring forth children in sorrow*, and together with Adam, was condemned to death, and assigned to the world of darkness.

“But how could death swallow this truly blessed soul, who humbly gave ear to the word of God, and was filled with the power of the Holy Ghost, and at the message of an Archangel, accepted the will of the Father, and without passion and without man conceived in her womb the Word of God Who fills all things, and who as was fitting brought Him forth without pain and who was wholly united to God, how could death devour her? How could hell receive her? How could corruption dare touch the body that had contained Life? Such thoughts are abhorrent and wholly repugnant in regard to the body and soul of the Mother of God.”

After describing the joy in heaven of receiving the Mother of God, Saint John Damascene continued, “And then Adam and Eve, the Parents of our race, from exultant lips cry out, their words heard far and wide: ‘O Blessed Daughter! Thou hast taken away the punishment of our disobedience... Thou sprung from our loins, hast brought back our happiness. Thou hast ended the pangs of childbirth, broken the bonds of death, restored us to our ancient home. We closed paradise; thou hast thrown wide the way to the Tree of Life. From our delight came sorrow; through thee our sorrow has brought us yet greater joy, and how canst thou all fair, O Immaculate, taste death?’”

And so, from the early Christians who celebrated Mary’s feast day in Jerusalem, the tradition spread in the East and was later adopted in the West.

In later centuries inspired by Mary’s victory over the punishment received by the first parents, the Church instituted processions, even walking through the countryside with its fields, farms, orchards and meadows, imploring God’s blessings. In coastal countries fisherman’s boats were blessed on the feast of Mary’s Assumption into heaven. In England and Ireland the faithful would go to the seashore or the lakes on August 15 for bathing to ask Our Lady to intercede for good health on her great feast, when all water in nature is considered blessed. (Francis X. Weiser, Handbook of Christian Feasts and Customs, Deus Books, New York, New York, pp. 173-175),

In Poland pilgrims annually walk, perhaps for almost a week, to the shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa. In rural areas on August 15 those who cannot make the pilgrimage bring bouquets and wreaths of flowers to the church to be blessed.

The Christians of past centuries observed the feast of Mary’s Assumption into heaven not as an excuse for a celebration, but as an acknowledgement of the true history of man. In recent years August 15 has been viewed as another feast day of Mary and a holy day of obligation in the summer. This view, combined with Darwinism, which is pervasive in today’s culture, has obscured the true meaning of Mary’s assumption into heaven.

Let us continue to pray that members of today’s and future generations will come to understand the real meaning of their existence and their relationship with Jesus the Redeemer. May they also acknowledge Mary, the Mother of God, as their Advocate.

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Jerusalem 1048-1291, Cyprus 1291-1310, Rhodes 1311-1523, Malta 1530-1798, Russia 1798-1907, U.S.A. 1908-

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