

This feast is fraught with problems. First, the Bible does not record the end of Mary's life, nor does any other document of the period. We have a legend that the apostles gathered with her at Ephesus when her soul and body were taken to heaven, but that's it. Further, to say that Mary's body was taken to heaven uses language that sounds counter to physics. It sounds like ~~heaven must be a place somewhere between Polaris and Jupiter.~~ ^{she rocketed up someplace} But if heaven is a physical place, ^{among the stars} it has physical limitations. We've got those now; we're hoping for something better. Then there are ecumenical problems; Catholics and Orthodox are the only ones gung-ho for the assumption. Most other Christians in good faith ~~that do~~ ^{love to ask but} question ~~it.~~ ^{it's Assumption} It's one of two infallible statements by Popes; the Immaculate Conception is the other. Infallibility remains greatly misunderstood inside and outside the Catholic Church. Then there are the practical problems. Even though the Assumption is a holiday in this country, to a large extent people just don't go to church on August 15, unless it's a Sunday. ~~I guess because~~ ^{Perhaps in people's minds} the doctrine on the Assumption just doesn't connect with real life as much as everything else there is to do that day. So you see the problems. ^{I can give you}

Why then do we have the Assumption? ~~I think we have it for~~ three reasons: ~~it~~ ^{it} says something glorious about Mary. ~~to say~~ something wonderful about God, and ~~it~~ ^{it} gives hope to the rest of us. Let me explain. The Assumption says Mary was taken up body and soul into heaven. The word "assumption" comes from the Latin word *sumo*, which has nothing to do with Japanese wrestling, but means "I take up." The reason the church makes this "assumption" is this: We believe Mary, the mother of Jesus, was therefore the mother of God. In a very physical way, during the nine months of her pregnancy, Mary and God were united. We believe that God made Mary worthy of this role by preserving her from sin throughout her life, from the moment of her conception. That's the doctrine we call the Immaculate Conception. The Assumption, then, takes the Immaculate Conception another step. It proclaims not only did God preserve Mary from the decay of sin; God preserved her from the decay of death. So what the assumption says about Mary is that she was the most glorious human being from conception through eternal life. What the Assumption says about God is that God has power to grant eternal life, which of course gives hope to the rest of us.

So, although this feast is fraught with problems, I kinda like it, because it's the Church's way of saying, "Take heart." You may think life is fraught with problems, meaningless suffering, and annoying riddles. But here's a rose for you, a bit of hope: God has power to make things right, and God used the power to make things right when he took Mary into heaven.