

Today is the great feast of the homecoming of Mother Mary to heaven. It's also, because Mary is the symbol and image of the Church and of each individual Christian, the feast of our own future homecoming to heaven.

About heaven ... people have many reactions. Some find the conjecture of an afterlife totally senseless. Others think maybe some abstract shadow called the soul escapes death, but we're not called to something as earthy and hearty as resurrection of the body. A few imagine we'll return like eternal drops to be absolved into an eternal sea, but won't recognize each other or be recognizable even to ourselves.

Our faith as Catholics in heaven, resurrection, glory ... is way more robust than that.

The Christian Heaven is the final perfection of ourselves through full communion with God and the holy ones. The words that St. Germain of Constantinople (patriarch: 715-730) pictures God saying to Mary on the occasion of her "falling asleep" are words said to each of us as we pass. "When your days came to an end in the heart of the corruptible world ... I shall show myself to you face to face ... Your body is mine; I hold in my hands the depths of the earth ... Entrust your body to me; have I not, myself, entrusted my divinity to your womb? You are going to contemplate the glory of my Father, with the eyes of your soul all full of God; you are going to contemplate the glory of his only son, with the eyes of your body without stain; you are going to contemplate the glory of the thrice-holy Spirit with the eyes of your immaculate spirit." (Sermon 2 on the Dormition of the Holy Virgin ... as cited in *Days of the Lord* VII, 69.)

Here is how writer David Watson sees heaven. "If we think of all the best and most glorious moments in our lives, the perfection of what we experience always seems just beyond our reach. As with striking a succession of matches to light a dark room those moments invariably seem to flicker and fade. Heaven will be like turning on the full light. The perfection will be there for us to enjoy, undefiled, unflickering and unfading ... In one sense the Christian is not preparing for death. Basically, he is preparing for life, abundant life in all its fullness. (cited in Tony Castle's *More Quotes and Anecdotes*, p.93).

We who are still journeying through this life, with our hearts fixed on heaven are exactly like the readings describe our sign and symbol Mother Mary. We are people who have still to deal with the horrible dragon whose tail sweeps a third of the stars from the heavens (that's our problems, sins, obsessions, addictions ... the evil in us and in the whole world), going through pangs of childbirth as we try to become holy. And we are at the same time, because we are so confident of God's promise, heavenly creatures clothed with the sun and moon, wearing a crown of 12 zodiac signs on our heads. St. Paul promises we will all be brought to life in Christ, with our enemy death be destroyed forever.

No wonder on this feast we can say, again with our symbol, sign and mother: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. ... all generations will me blessed.