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St. Joseph, Charlton
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, 2018

Why are we here? Why is this feast day a holy day?

I think I have told the story once before of a friend who left the Church not because the Church had defined two Marian dogmas that he did not believe in, the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, but because he thought the popes who did so had unnecessarily taught things that don't matter very much *and* in doing so had done damage to the possibilities of Christian unity. He would ask, "Why does the Assumption matter enough to be a dogma? It's about Mary, not Jesus."

Every Marian teaching points to Christ or teaches us about ourselves. The Assumption is actually about the whole Mystery of the Church. Mary is the first disciple. She is the perfect disciple, and you see, down the centuries, one error has crept up again and again: the false belief says that we are souls, trapped in bodies, and we will eventually be set free from our bodies. But the Truth is that Christ united his divine nature to a human nature. He had a body, and he still has a human body. He rose and ascended into Heaven with a human body. He sits at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us with a body. And to show that what first took place in the Christ the Head of the Mystical Body the Church would eventually be shared with the rest of his members, he brought with him his mother, the first and perfect disciple, as a sign of the hope to be given to all of us. Yes, each one of will have our bodies with us in Heaven. That means there was no "in my past life I was an ostrich" as if the soul hops from one body to another. I am not "me" without my body.

Today, we see a plethora of anti-body movements that stem from this false notion of who we are as persons. It lies behind the movement for euthanasia, when you hear, "No, that person with Alzheimer's is not grandma. We need to do what we did to Fluffy our kitten and set grandma free from this life and that body." While grandma might not have the same mental capacity she once did, that remains her. She is not trapped. Death is not a "setting free." It lies behind the notion that a newborn baby can still be put to death because it is not rational yet, or that the child in the womb is not a full-human yet.

It lies behind much of the confusion about sexuality and gender. It is this same misguided notion that says things like, "What you do does not matter, as long as what is in your heart is pure," as if the actions we do and how we treat one another does not directly flow from what is in our mind and heart. I could go on. Some people see this confusion and want strong denunciations from the pulpit and engagement in the culture war, as if the confused are evil. Those who are confused in this regard are not our enemies. They are our brothers and sisters, hurting and in need the true medicine of mercy and truth that the Church has.

This is why studies show that those who abide by the Church's teachings in these areas are much happier than those who do not, as they are living in accord with their true nature, which is both body and spirit. An obvious example is the random hook-up. Think of these apps where people sort through photos of strangers swiping whether are interested in a random hook-up. They don't lead to happiness but to heartache. People can claim it is meaningless, just a sharing of a bodily act, but it is not. The whole person is involved. As Saint John Paul the Second said, "The body, in fact, and only the body, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and the divine" (TOB 19:4).

The Church holds the truth of 2,000 years of Christianity that tells us we are not just our souls. She proclaims that we are body-soul unities. She declares that the body is good, that the body is holy, that the body is redeemed, that the body will rise from the dead. She testifies to the fact of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven. This---all of this---is the medicine of mercy needed today.

In the time of St. Dominic, similar anti-body beliefs were abounding, and people would say that, "Since the body is evil, things like marriage are evil," when in fact, marriage is a sacrament, and it is holy. As an antidote the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to Saint Dominic and encouraged the rosary, a meditation on the Incarnation, as the solution to the confusion. No one can meditate on God taking on human flesh and maintain the body is evil. We would do well to propose a renewed commitment to that meditation, daily, even if only in part a decade, but the more the better. We also do well to spend time before our Lord in Eucharistic adoration, where the divine meets the human, where Christ Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity comes to us under the appearance of Bread. This is why it is so fitting we have 24 hours of adoration today. These are confusing times, in which the culture is highly critical of the truths of our faith. We must go forth to the people of our time and bring them healing and love, to a confused and broken world. At times when we proclaim the truth with love, we are afraid that we might experience hostility, but we know to expect this, for our Lord said, "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me." We have nothing to fear, as Our Lady of Fatima told the visionaries just over one-hundred years ago, "*In the end, My Immaculate Heart will triumph.*"