August 16, 2015

August 15th is the Feast of the Assumption of Mary. Since this date falls on a Saturday this year, it is not a holy day of obligation. It is, however, worth pondering just what this teaching means for us as Catholics.

The feast celebrates our belief that Mary’s body was “assumed” into heaven at the end of her life. You may be surprised to know that though this tradition dates back at least to the 5th century, it was only formally approved as a doctrine of the Catholic Church by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

There is incredible depth to the tradition and teaching of Mary’s Assumption. I want to highlight one aspect that strikes me in particular. The Apostle’s Creed states we believe in “the resurrection of the body.” Our faith tells us human beings are body and soul, physical and spiritual beings. Because that is who we are, we cannot share in the resurrection as merely dis-embodied spirits.

We also believe Mary was the first of believers who said yes to God’s Word and bore Christ. It is fitting, therefore, that she is first to share in the fruits of His resurrection. She is the model for all the faithful. The Feast of the Assumption of Mary reminds us of our own sharing in Christ’s life forever.

Fr. Dan White, S.J.