

Feast of the Assumption BVM 2026

In recent days the newspapers have reported widely on the youngest professor at Cambridge, Jason Arday, who was accused of plagiarism. Such was the scandal around his appointment that as a result of this he has resigned from his exalted academic post.

Academic excellence and learning are not only all important to our universities, but also to our schools and colleges. On Thursday there were the *A Level* and *B Tech* results. Thankfully no one is accusing any of our teenagers of plagiarism. They have worked incredibly hard for their results. For them, these are life changing results that will be key to their futures. Next week there are the GCSE results, which again are so important to our teenagers and their futures.

What isn't said on the news is the concern that teachers have over the results. Not only for themselves, but also for the standing of the schools in which they teach. In my last school, the subject teachers were expected to be present at the handing out of the results. If any results were disappointing, the staff would be called in for a meeting with the headteacher to explain why. The truth is teachers are judged by these results.

In the world of education people are often more impressed by brains rather than by money or beauty. Success is measured in starred firsts, distinctions, PhDs, professorships and published works. Knowledge on the whole is a very good thing. The facts are your friends – they are important. Education in itself is good; reading, learning and discovering. However, as **Lord Byron** wrote, “*The tree of knowledge is not that of life.*” We need to see ‘knowledge’ in perspective. Our knowledge is very limited. The more we know, the more we realise how little we know. God is our creator, and he alone knows everything.

There are different types of knowledge, but they are not all equally valuable. For example, in the French language, there are two different words for to ‘know.’ One (*savoir*) means to know a fact. The other word (*connaître*) means to know a person. God is more interested in **knowing people** than facts. The most important knowledge of all is knowing God, and being known by him. Even this is not the end though. It is never enough simply to have knowledge. You must have love.

Today, we celebrate the wonderful solemnity of the *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Many of those outside the Catholic Church find this teaching beyond belief. Part of their misunderstanding comes from its very name. **Assumption** – and therefore **assuming** its meaning. At school, I always taught that we must never ‘**assume**’ because ‘*it makes and ass of you and me.*’ Some people **assume** what the feast means, and therefore they are rejecting what the Catholic Church is actually teaching by this important feast day.

What is truly amazing was that it was not until 1950 that the Church formally recognized the Assumption of Our Lady as a dogma of our faith. This proclamation by **Pope Pius XII** was simply confirming definitively what the Church had long believed. It was a dogma that came from the people rather than from the bishops. Interestingly, the Church does not decide the question as to whether or not Mary died. Instinctively, people have recognised that Mary had to sinless like Jesus. Unlike Jesus, no tomb has ever been found where Mary was buried. Simply because there never was one in the first place. The Eastern Church has always called this feast the ‘**Dormition**’ the falling asleep of Mary.

Unlike the Ascension of Jesus, there is nothing that in Scripture that explicitly tells us that Mary ascended into heaven. However, it has been the belief of the Church from the earliest days that Mary's assumption is implicitly revealed in the scriptures, and confirmed by the tradition handed on in the Church from generation to generation. In the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation, it paints a dramatic picture of the culmination of Christ's saving work. We are told that the woman who brought the male child into the world was taken to a place of safety while Christ's victory was proclaimed. Through this we are reminded that the Blessed Virgin Mary was raised body and soul into heaven. It assures us of not only Mary's place in heaven, but of ours, too. It affirms Mary's humanity. She is one with us.

Today gives us the opportunity not to get bogged down by facts, but rather to reflect on the ongoing relevance of Mary in our lives as followers of Christ. Some of those in the Protestant churches, mistakenly believe that Catholics pay too much attention to Mary. Thinking that we worship her in a way that should be reserved for God alone. But the truth is we do not worship Mary. Rather, we honour her and venerate her because of who she was.

Without Mary's "yes" to the angel there would be no incarnate Saviour. No conception by the Holy Spirit for the Christ Child to be born. Jesus is both divine and human. She is the focus of what we believe about the incarnation of Jesus. Get this understanding wrong, and then you face all the same heresies which faced the early Church.

In today's world, where feminism and gender identity have become dominant in our society, Mary is key in addressing these modern creeds. It is interesting to note that the churches that give no space for Mary are the very churches that have embraced this present liberal thinking. People forget that the Catholic Church calls Mary ***our mother*** for good reason. We venerate the Holy family of Mary and Joseph as the divine example for us of the family. This is why the Church teaching on marriage differs from that of much of our modern society. It must be said that the Catholic Church does not set out condemn anyone. Far from it. But rather, we are a people of faith who are called follow the '*maker's instructions*' found in Scriptures which enables us to live out our lives fully as God intended. Therefore, with Mary as our Mother, we can be freed from the false creeds of our society to be Christ's ambassadors here on earth.

I began by expressing the importance of factual knowledge. But factual knowledge is not the be all, and end all, even though it is important. Knowing people in love, knowing God and his ways, are the most important lessons that we shall ever have to learn.

Reflection:

- *Just as Mary said "Yes" to doing God's will, so we can say "Yes" and play our part in ensuring the God's will be done.*

Prayer:

A prayer that is possibly the oldest one to the Mother of God from the 3rd century.

we fly to thy protect,
O holy Mother of God;
despise not our petitions in our necessities,
but deliver us from all dangers,
O glorious and blessed Virgin.

Amen.