

hands, of thy fingers'—in all the massive handiwork and in the delicate touches of God, we also have to sigh that 'For thee, O dear, dear country, Mine eyes their vigils keep'; and, with yet another pagan, that we are 'reaching out our hands in longing for the further shore'. But our Lady is *there*, and just where God would have her be.

In the Vision of Fatima our Lady, said Lucia, was 'altogether Light'—*toda de luz*. But the children could not look at her for long. She 'dazzled' them. They were not 'there' yet. So, for our part, while being so glad for our Lady's sake, yes, and for our Lord's, and for God's, that she is what she is, we continue to pray, in the words of St Thomas's hymn: '*Duc nos quo tendimus*'—'lead us by thy paths'—not by our chosen but erratic tracks!—whither we are tending—to the Light wherein thou dwellest'.



## THE FOURTH GLORIOUS MYSTERY

BY

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**R**ECENTLY I came across an attractive little booklet entitled, *How to say the Rosary*, written by an Anglican. It was well printed and everything about it was in the best possible taste. There were artistic prints, the letterpress at first sight seemed very good, and the instructions admirable: it was almost too good to be true. I turned over the pages and read on to what actually turned out to be the bitter end, for I was told after the third Glorious Mystery, that the last two, the Assumption and Coronation of Our Lady, were to be omitted because there was no justification for them in Holy Scripture. That meant presumably that they were nowhere explicitly mentioned in the Bible. Well! I had already been told to say the *Hail Mary*, including the second part in which our Lady is invoked as *Holy Mary, Mother of God*—a title not to be found in Scripture and (like the *Glory be to the Father*) only explicitly formulated as Catholic doctrine in the fourth century. Then too the *Salve Regina* is not to be discovered in so many words in Scripture, and I could not help thinking that my would-be instructor in how to say the Rosary was being a bit inconsistent.

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And was he not missing the whole point of the Rosary which is not only a method of prayer but a scheme for teaching the mystery of God made man? The miracle of miracles, the central Christian fact is that God came into this world, clothed in our humanity, and that he chose for himself a human mother. The Incarnation is God blessing his Creation and crowning it gloriously with his presence visible in human disguise. That mystery had a beginning in time and it began in most holy Mary. She is the dawn that heralds the day. In her most pure body the divine Word is humanised. Her immaculate heart is the spring from which arose the precious blood that redeems the world. All that we believe about our Lady is derived from that intimate relationship of mother and Son.

There are three things in creation, says St Thomas Aquinas, that come nearest to God because they are in a way immersed in God: first, the created bliss of the soul that enjoys the beatific vision, secondly Christ's humanity which is intimately, hypostatically one with the Word of God, and thirdly Mary's divine Motherhood which is wrapped up in God. These three created marvels are God's ways of raising earth to heaven. This 'mothering of God' in our Lady which, says St Thomas, gives her an infinite excellence, explains all her titles and prerogatives. Her immaculate conception—her immunity from the common curse of sin—places her on the heavenly plane. *Non dabis sanctum tuum videre corruptionem*—'Thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption'. These prophetic words apply to Son and mother. The Immaculate Conception is her preservation from spiritual corruption, the Assumption from physical. The creation of her soul is simultaneous with her redemption and the liberation of her soul from her body in death is simultaneous with her resurrection. She is uniquely redeemed: she is uniquely resurrected.

The Assumption means the end of our Lady's exile—her glorious home-coming. She is the first complete human person to enter, body and soul, into the bliss of heaven. *Quis ascendet in montem Domini?* Who will dare to go up into the mountain of the Lord and stand in the holy place? Only the guiltless in act and the pure of heart. Here is the one perfectly pure soul in all the world completely justified by God. With her, God has perfectly fulfilled his Will and the Assumption is God proving and vindicating the mystery of his election.

A sermon of St John Damascene quoted in the Roman Breviary describes our Lady's Assumption in these words: 'It has been handed down to us from olden times that when the Blessed Virgin so gloriously fell asleep, all the holy Apostles who were travelling

around the world for the salvation of the gentiles, were in a moment carried off into the air and assembled together at Jerusalem. And then was heard the sound of the heavenly powers singing Psalms, and so, amid the manifestation of his glory, into the hands of God she resigned her holy soul. Her body, which, by an unspeakable mystery, had held God, was carried forth amid the chants of Angels and Apostles and laid in a sepulchre at Gethsemane, and there for three days the songs of Angels never ceased. After three days the sound of Angels singing had ceased, and at that time the Apostles who were there, along with Thomas, opened the tomb. But the holy body was nowhere to be found. There remained only the wrappings in which it had been shrouded and an exquisite fragrance of perfume that came from them, and they therefore again closed the tomb.'

The Assumption is our Lady's greatest feast. It is the climax of our Lady's vocation—the climax of our faith in the sweet mystery of God made man.

Live, rosy princess, live. And may the bright  
Crown of a most incomparable light  
Embrace thy radiant brows, O may the best  
Of everlasting joys bathe thy white breast.  
Live, our chaste love, the holy mirth  
Of heaven: the humble pride of earth.  
Live, crown of women: Queen of men.  
Live, mistress of our song. And when  
Our weak desires have done their best,  
Sweet Angels come, and sing the rest.