

**Msgr. Dennis Sheehan**  
**Homily Given on August 15, 2010**  
**Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

I once asked my first-year college theology class if they could explain the Catholic doctrine of the Assumption of Mary. One confident student told me, "Yeah, that's the doctrine where we all 'assume' Mary is in heaven." No star pupil, that one. There's more to the Assumption than that. The Church has not assumed Mary is in heaven. The Church has declared, taught, preached as gospel that Mary – body and soul – is in heaven.

Two thoughts only on this mystery. First a word about heaven. Then a second moment for "body and soul in heaven".

First then to heaven. We have sometimes thought of heaven as "up there". We know it's not "up". In fact, it's far more real to say that heaven is "beside" us than "up there". Heaven is only a veil away, one writer said. A wave of the hand, and we almost touch it.

Remember the Harry Potter books and movies? When Harry was leaving home each fall to return to Hogwarts school of magic, he arrived at the railway station. He was looking for track "9  $\frac{3}{4}$ "! If we picture heaven as only a veil away, as near as the wave of a hand, we realize something wonderful. Heaven is near us. Heaven is all around us. More than that, Jesus brought heaven to earth. In Jesus Christ, the veil broke, and heaven burst in on us.

Mary, to my second thought, is "in heaven". Today's feast proclaims that she is there "body and soul". Think of it: a human body in heaven. We readily think of souls in heaven, but...a body? Yes, but more. In a moment, in the preface to the Eucharistic prayer we will hear: "She is the beginning and the pattern of the church made perfect." Today is about Mary, but also about us. Our common hope is that, at a day of God's choosing, we too – body and soul – like Mary – are destined for heaven.

We have signs of it even now. Every time we celebrate Eucharist, the veil that separates heaven from hearth opens. Every Sunday, we meet heaven right here.

"The almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name," Mary sings in the gospel. We can all join her song today and tomorrow. God is indeed doing great things for each of us and all of us. For heaven comes down to earth and for the hope of being – body and soul – with Mary and one another, today let us give thanks to the Lord our God.