

Every now and then someone suggests I just use the same homilies from years ago, as no one will remember. But people do remember. However, two years ago I gave a homily on the Feast of the Assumption. That year August fifteenth was on a Thursday. We only had a fraction of the people here today. So, with apologies to those who remember, I will repeat what I said two year ago.

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In the Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer - that prayer I pray before the Holy, Holy, Holy – it refers to Mary’s Assumption into heaven as “the beginning and image of your Church’s coming to perfection.” It also prays to God the Father, “rightly you would not allow her to see the corruption of the tomb.”

This Holy Day is about Mary being “Assumed” or “taken up” into Heaven, both soul AND body.

Why her body? Because unlike the Angels, who are Spirits only, God made us human beings with souls and bodies. God intended us to be body-and-soul. And therefore what are separated at death - our body and our soul - are reunited at the Resurrection. Mary has been given the gift of the Resurrection before the rest of us.

So, our bodies matter. What we do to our bodies matter. And what we do with our bodies matter.

Maybe that is one of the many reasons part of our Title of the Blessed Mother is usually “The Blessed Virgin Mary.” That is one of the reasons we include that Mary is “Virgin.” Virginity says something about our bodies.

Virginity refers to a person having not yet been sexually intimate.

Today, our world speaks of Virginity as a symbol of inexperience. If that is the case; then virginity is something to get rid of or given away as soon as possible. It is something to be initiated out of. And all too often, it is something people take from another. This is a reversal of how we have spoken of it for centuries.

The normal understanding Christianity contributes is that virginity represents innocence. A man’s sexual ability is a gift meant only for his wife. A woman’s sexual ability is a gift only for her husband. It is chastity before marriage, and so it is practice for chastity to only one’s husband or wife in marriage.

Now note what I just said and what I did not say. I did not say Virginity is a judgement against those who fail. Virginity is a part of our integrity we wish to hold dear and treasure. And we are to value and protect the virginity of others. And if we fail, we come to God to cleanse us, and help us grow in purity again.

Because of that, Virginity then stands as a sign of one's strength and commitment to do what is right. We want to remain innocent. We want to be pure before God in all areas of our life. That includes all the ways we use our bodies. It includes not taking drugs. It includes speaking the truth. It includes not hurting others. Believe it or not, as people get older, if they draw close to Christ, they are sometimes haunted by the sins they committed earlier, even after they have been forgiven, because they lost an innocence they had.

We want to draw close to God, who makes us pure, and gives us the ability to stay away from sin. And again, if we sin, God cleans us up and gives us the helps, the graces, to return to a path of purity.

So the title of Mary as "Ever Virgin" belongs to her for two reasons. The first, obviously, is because she remained a virgin all her earthly life. And second, because she was sinless, pure, uncorrupted, her entire earthly life.

So we hold up purity as a goal for each of us while we are here on earth, body-and-soul.

Mary is a shining example of what we can be on earth, and in heaven. Because in heaven, we will be with Our Lord; who in becoming one of us, joined His divinity not just with a human soul, but a human body.

Our bodies make a difference. And so we daily try to make a difference with our bodies. Like Our Lord. And like the Blessed Virgin Mary.