The Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Jesus described himself as the good shepherd. The word "good" is significant in more than one way. I found the most delightful that good means handsome or beautiful. The good shepherd is the beautiful shepherd. Jesus is beautiful and it is that pure beauty that makes him compellingly attractive. It is that amazing charisma that causes the first disciples to instantly drop everything and immediately follow him. The hymn writer got it right with those words, **"Fix your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the cares of the world will grow strangely dim in the light of his wonder and grace."**

That is the business of heaven: the pure joy of gazing at the transfigured and transfiguring beauty of Jesus in his glory.

So, what has this to do with the Assumption of Our Lady? Well, I am sure you know where I am going. Jesus originates this beauty not just by being God, the source of all beauty, but also by being his mother's son. Jesus is utterly beautiful because Mary is utterly beautiful too. They share a beauty to which countless religious artists fail to do justice. Of course, Jesus gains his goodness through Mary in other ways too. Goodness is also a moral quality and Mary, by example, raises Jesus to be good. This is rather more important than it first appears. Luke tells us that after losing Jesus for three days, Mary and Joseph find him in the Temple listening and asking questions. He then returns to Nazareth with them and, Luke

points out, is obedient to them. Long before Jesus was tested in the wilderness, he learned goodness from Mary and Joseph. Through infancy, childhood, youth, and beyond, Jesus' formation, his capacity to choose the good and resist temptation, is down to Mary and Joseph.

Good means beautiful. Good means of high moral standing. Good also means efficient, effective, and fit for purpose. And once again this applies to Our Lady. Mary had a unique and vital role in God's plan for our salvation. She was chosen, predestined, to be united with Jesus in the victory over sin and death. Without her, it would have been impossible. That God enabled her to fulfill this role is implied by the Archangel Gabriel's greeting, **"Hail Mary full of grace."** It is by his grace that God enables us to accomplish his will. But to understand this more fully we need to go beyond scripture to the Church's teaching.

Mary could have said no to God. The good lord does not override our free will. But he predisposed her to say yes not just by his grace but by her redemption in anticipation of what Christ would achieve. Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin. Thus, equipped for her unique vocation, the sinless Mother cooperates with the sinless Son until at the end of her earthly life, she was taken body and soul into heavenly glory there to take her place as Queen of Heaven. Formerly the son was conformed to his mother in obedience to the Father's will; at her taking her place in heaven she is conformed to her son as conqueror over sin and

death. The assumption of Mary is a singular participation in her son's resurrection and an anticipation of our resurrection.

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Heaven could not be heaven without Mary as Queen. Christ in all his glory couldn't bear to be without her. Having gone before us through trial and difficulty, Mary our mother in union with Jesus waits for us in heaven, helping us on our way, cheering us on to completion and joy. **Amen**.