

# THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY INTO HEAVEN ACCORDING TO SAINT BONAVENTURE

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**Abstract:** SALVADOR-GONZÁLEZ, José María. *The Assumption of Mary into Heaven According to Saint Bonaventure*. With this article we aim to shed light on the various, specific arguments with which the prestigious 13th century Franciscan theologian Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1217/21 – 1274) – known as the Seraphic Doctor (*Doctor Seraphicus*) –, defended the belief in the immediate resurrection and assumption of Mary, body and soul, into heaven. As a necessary doctrinal foundation for his position in this regard, we will first present a summary of the biblical, apocryphal, patristic and theological antecedents on which the Christian belief in the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven is based. We will then proceed by following step by step the complex reasoning of Saint Bonaventure to justify his defense of the assumptionist thesis. The results of our study will show the originality of the arguments through which this influential Franciscan thinker defended the belief in the bodily Assumption of Mary and her sublime exaltation as enthroned Queen of Heaven. Indeed, St. Bonaventure's arguments (along with those of his prestigious colleagues at the Franciscan Theological School) in favor of belief in the bodily Assumption of Mary into heaven contributed greatly to the official definition of the dogma of the Assumption in 1950 by Pope Pius XII.

**Keywords:** *Mariology, Christian tradition, resurrection, heavenly exaltation, celestial Queenship*

## 1. Textual background of the belief in Mary's Assumption into heaven

Although there are several articles dealing with St. Bonaventure's theology on the Assumption of Mary, we have not wanted to confront them here for two essential reasons: first, because the limited length of the article would not allow it; second, and above all, because our intention is to study the primary sources directly, namely, the original writings of the Master of Bagnoregio. Therefore, we have concentrated on exposing the general logical structure, and on thoroughly analyzing each of the arguments with which the Seraphic Doctor defends his position on the matter. It is precisely this focus on the Bonaventurian primary sources that underlies the originality of our article.

As those who have studied the subject of the Assumption of Mary into heaven point out (Jugie 1944; Bover 1947; Malo 1948; Longpré 1948; Laurentin 1967; Duggan 1989; Mimouni 1995; Calvo Moralejo – Cecchin 2001; Shoemaker 2002; Perrella – De Fiores 2009; Fehlner 2011), this belief has numerous biblical, apocryphal and patristic antecedents, which we will summarize below.

### 1.1. Biblical antecedents of Mary's Assumption

The Fathers and theologians thought that several passages of the Old and New Testament foretell the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven (Serra 2006, 147-151; De Fiores 2006, 84-85). These biblical passages are:

1) God's sentence after the original sin "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel" (Gn 3,15. *Bible online*: New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition. NRSVCE), that was interpreted with a Mariological approach by almost all the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Churches.

2) The command "Honor your father and your mother" (Ex 20,12. NRSVCE), which they apply in the sense that Christ could not fail to honor his mother, exalting her in body and soul to heaven.

3) The announcement "I will glorify where my feet rest" (Is 60,13. NRSVCE), which they understand in the sense that the body of the Virgin is the tabernacle where God placed his feet.

4) The verses of the Psalms "at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir" (Ps 45,9. NRSVCE) and "The princess is decked in her chamber with gold-woven robes; in many-colored robes she is led to the king [...] as they enter the palace of the king" (Ps 45,14-16. NRSVCE), that they see as figures of the exaltation of Mary by God when she is assumed into heaven.

5) The verse "Rise up, O Lord, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might" (Ps 132,8. NRSVCE), which is interpreted by the Fathers and theologians with a similar Assumptionist sense: they see the Ark of the Covenant, made of incorruptible wood, as a prefiguration of Mary's body, incorruptible after death.

6) The passage from the Song of Solomon mentioning a woman "What is that coming up from the wilderness, like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all the fragrant powders of the merchant?" (Song 3:6. NRSVCE), that is understood by the Fathers and theologians as a figure of Mary in her bodily Assumption into heaven.

7) The greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin at the Annunciation "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you" (Luke 1:28. NRSVCE), which is related by the masters of Christian doctrine as an announcement of the exaltation of Mary in her assumption.

8) With a similar assumptionist projection, the Church Fathers and theologians interpret the Visitation of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth and the song of the Magnificat (Luke 1:41-55).

9) The passages from the Apocalypse: "A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev 12:1. NRSVCE) and "the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to her place where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev 12:14. NRSVCE), that have always been interpreted by the Fathers and theologians as a prefiguration of Mary in her bodily assumption into heaven.

Almost all the Church Fathers maintained that Mary died naturally, like other mortals, although no canonical text documents Mary's death or its specific circumstances. Given the scarcity of New Testament texts on the life of the Virgin Mary, from early times of our era, some anonymous legends describing alleged details of Mary's death, burial, and even bodily assumption into heaven began to spread orally among Christian communities, especially in the East. These oral legends were transcribed from approximately the 4th century in various apocryphal writings of diverse linguistic origin, known as Assumptionist apocrypha (Santos Otero 2006). José María Bover (1947, 155-196) mentions such apocrypha, diversifying them according to types and linguistic groups, and analyzing their historical value and theological interest.

Among the Assumptionist apocrypha, the following stand out: *Transitus B. Mariae auctore Pseudo-Melitone* (4th century), *Iohannis apostoli liber de dormitione sanctae Deiparae*, dating back to the 4th century or before (Otero 2006, 576-600), *Transitus W or Adsumptio sanctae Mariae* (Bover 1947, 179-196), *The Book of John*, Archbishop of Tessaaloniki, c. 7th century (Santos Otero 2006, 576-600), and *Transitus B. Mariae auctore Pseudo-Iosepho ab Arimathea*, late recasting of the preceding apocryphal text (Santos Otero 2006, 640-653). These apocrypha affirm, each in its own way, the imaginary circumstances of the death, burial, and bodily assumption of the Virgin

into heaven, as we have explained in other articles (Salvador-González 2011, 237-268; 2012, 1-40; 2017a, 139-168; 2017b, 185-230; 2020, 276-291).

## 1.2. Patristic and theological background of the Assumptionist belief

Apart from the Assumptionist apocrypha, from the first centuries of the Christian era several Eastern and Western Church Fathers affirmed the natural death of Mary, many of them going so far as to defend her almost immediate bodily assumption into heaven (Meo 1986, 151-161). In defense of the belief in Mary's Assumption into heaven, numerous testimonies from Fathers and theologians of the Greek-Eastern and Latin-Western Churches are documented between the 4th and 13th centuries (Bover 1947, 98-196; Longpré 1948, 203-230; Sesboüé 1998, 513-528).

Without attempting to catalogue the complete list of these Church Fathers, we mention here the most important defenders of the assumption of the Virgin Mary into heaven. In the Greek-Eastern Churches, the following Fathers stand out: St. Ephrem the Syrian (306-373) maintains in two sermons the belief in Mary's natural death (Bover 1947, 23, 101-102, 127-132, 358-360). Timothy of Jerusalem, in a text datable to the end of the 4th century or beginning of the 5th, is the first documented author to mention the assumption of Mary body and soul into heaven (Bover 1947, 98-99; Meo 1986, 151).

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (330 – 389/90) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (335 – c. 395) reflect along similar lines. Saint Epiphanius of Salamis (310/15 – 403), even if hesitating a lot to affirm something certain about the earthly end of the Virgin, speaks of the assumption of the Virgin in two texts, which Bover (1947, 99-101, 119-125) presents as proof that this saint is a precursor of the assumptionist doctrine. Severian of Gabala (c. 380 – c. 408) adheres to this belief in a treatise on creation (Bover 1947, 23). Other Eastern Church Fathers who promoted the assumption of Mary are Timothy of Jerusalem (4th – 5th centuries), Saint Cyril of Alexandria (c. 370/73 – 444), Hesychius of Jerusalem († 450), Chrysippus of Jerusalem (c. 409 – 479), Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (5th – 6th centuries) and Jacob of Sarugh (451 – 521), who affirms it in a hymn in Syriac (Bover 1947, 23).

Already in the 7th-8th centuries, all the Eastern Church Fathers who deal with Mary's death subscribe to the certainty of her bodily assumption into heaven. Among such defenders of the Marian assumption, the following stand out:

Saint Modestus of Jerusalem († 634) would be the first explicit defender of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven (Bover 1947, 105; Meo 1986, 152), if he is the author of the *Encomium in dormitionem* attributed to him (Modestus Hierosolymitanus. PG 86, 3288-3293). John of Thessalonica († 639) recounts *in extenso* the supposed circumstances of the death, burial and assumption of Mary in *De Dormitione B. Virginis* (Casas Otero 2006, 605-639). St. Germanus of Constantinople (635 – 732/33) defends her bodily assumption in three homilies on the Dormition of the Virgin (Germanus Constantinopolitanus. PG 98, 340-357). St. Andrew of Crete (650 – 740) is one of the main defenders of Mary's assumption in three homilies on the Dormition of the Virgin (Andreas Cretensis. PG 97, 1045-1110).

In addition to St. Cosmas the Melodist († 743), Theodore Studita (758/59 – 826) stands out (Bover 1947, 108; Meo 1986, 152), who wrote a sermon on the transit of the Virgin and her immediate assumption into Paradise (Theodorus Studita. PG 99, 719-729). Also, Saint John Damascene (c. 675/76 – 749) in three homilies on the Virgin's Dormition proclaims her bodily assumption into heaven (Joannis Damascenus. PG 96, 700-721; PG 96, 740-753; PG 96, 753-761).

Other Eastern Church Fathers who subscribed to the doctrine of Mary's bodily assumption are St. Epiphanius the Monk (8th – 9th centuries), St. Joseph the Hymnographer (816 – 886), George

of Nicomedia († 880), Symeon Metaphrastes († 970), John the Geometer († 1005), John of Eucaia († 1054) and Michael Glykas († 1190) (Bover 1947, 108-110; Meo 1986, 152).

Among the Latin Church Fathers and theologians who defended the assumptionist belief, St. Ambrose of Milan (339/40 – 397) and St. Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430) stand out (Bover 1947, 23-24; Meo 1986, 152). In the 6th century, St. Gregory of Tours (538 – 594) was the first Western theologian to defend the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven (Gregorius Turonensis. PL 71, 708). In turn, St. Venantius Fortunatus (530 – 610) subtly suggested the Marian assumption in a poem (Bover 1947, 102-103). In the 7th and 8th centuries, St. Isidore of Seville (c. 560 – 636) and St. Bede the Venerable (673 – 735) were distinguished as supporters of Mary's assumption. From the 9th century onwards, numerous Western Church Fathers and theologians sustained the assumption of Mary body and soul into heaven (Bover 1947, 112-113; Meo 1986, 152). Among them we can mention Saint Fulbert of Chartres (960 – 1028), Saint Peter Damian (1007 – 1072), Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34 – 1109), Peter Abelard (1079 – 1142), Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153), Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096 – 1141), Saint Amadeus of Lausanne (1110 – 1159), Richard of Saint-Victor (1110 – 1173), Philip of Harveng (1110 – 1183), Peter of Celle (c. 1115 – 1183), Saint Martin of Leon (1130 – 1203), Peter of Blois (1135 – 1203), William of Auvergne (1180 – 1249) and Vincent of Beauvais (c. 1190 – 1256). The 13th century was the medieval period of greatest impetus in favor of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven, thanks above all to the contributions of the theologians of the Franciscan School.

After this summary of the background to the doctrine of Mary's assumption into heaven (Bover 1947; Malo 1948), we will now present the opinion on the matter conveyed by St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (c. 1217/21 – 1274), one of the Franciscan masters of the 13th century who most distinguished himself in the defense of the assumptionist thesis. Along with him, his 13th century Franciscan colleagues Saint Anthony of Padua, Jean de la Rochelle, Alexander of Hales, Conrad of Saxony, Bartolomeo da Bologna, Matteo d'Acquasparta, Servasanto da Faenza, William of Ware and John Duns Scotus also distinguished themselves as defenders of this belief, whose opinions on the subject we will present in another article.

## 2. St. Bonaventure's arguments in favor of the assumptionist belief

St. Bonaventure accepts the belief that Mary died before being assumed into heaven. In several passages of his third book of *Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, he affirms that the Virgin necessarily had to die and suffer,<sup>1</sup> for two essential reasons. First, because it was not fitting that Mary should be immortal, when her son Christ was mortal and died.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, because Mary's death and passibility were a consequence of the guilt of original sin, with which she was contaminated when she was conceived. On the contrary, Christ's death and passibility did not derive from original sin, from which he was exempt, but from the express will of God the Father, who did not exempt him from dying to redeem humanity.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Virgo habuit necessitatem moriendi et patiendi” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, Sent III, d. 16, art. 1, q. 3; Q III, 350a).

<sup>2</sup> “3. Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod potuit mori: dicendum, quod non est simile, pro eo quod non fuit decens, Filium Dei habere matrem immortalem, cum ipse esset mortalis” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, Sent III, d.3, p. 1, art. 2, q. 3; Q III, 78b).

<sup>3</sup> “4. Ad illud quod obiicitur, quod Christus in passibilitate assimilabatur Matri; dicendum, quod etsi aliquo modo assimilaretur ei, nihilominus tamen in modo et causa reperitur differentia. Nam Virgo passibilitatem habet pro reatu peccati originalis ex necessitate contracto; Christus vero passibilitatem

Furthermore, St. Bonaventure states in his fifth sermon on the Virgin's birth that just as, in living and conceiving, Mary did not disintegrate with the corruption of concupiscence, so in dying she did not decompose with the pain of being devoured by worms and turning into ashes; because this privilege was most suitable for the incorrupt viscera of her virginal womb.<sup>4</sup>

St. Bonaventure, who devoted four sermons to the Assumption, did not think it necessary to make any explicit declaration or argument to prove Mary's resurrection: he takes it as undeniable, as an indispensable condition for Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven, a thesis that the Seraphic Doctor resolutely defends in these four sermons.

Furthermore, St. Bonaventure proposes as an essential reason for Mary's bodily Assumption her "perfect happiness," in the sense that, for Mary's happiness to be perfect in her assumption, it is necessary that not only her soul be glorified, but also her body. In his opinion, the sentence in the Song of Solomon about the woman who comes up from the desert, dripping with delight and leaning on her beloved, signifies the special mode of Mary's perfection in heaven, which is only possible if she is also perfect in her body.<sup>5</sup>

The Seraphic Doctor reinforces his reasoning by insisting that being supported by her beloved, pouring out delights, which expresses the fullness of happiness and the glorification of the Virgin in heaven, would not be a full happiness if it were not for her entire person; and, as the person of Mary is not only her soul, but the union of her soul and her body, such a fullness of happiness demands that it also affect her body, through the assumption of the Virgin in body and soul into heaven.<sup>6</sup>

St. Bonaventure addresses this theme on several occasions and in various ways. In his first sermon on the Assumption he says that Mary, when assumed into heaven, has subjected the hierarchies of angels and men; for which reason she is designated as "bitter sea," because she purges; as "illuminator," because she illuminates; and as "Lady," because she perfects; therefore, she is elevated above the purgative, illuminating and perfecting angelic hierarchy, and above the human hierarchy which must be purged, illuminated and perfected.<sup>7</sup> In another passage of this

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habuit absque aliquo reatu in ipso reperto, ex sola dispensatione divina" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, Sent III, d. 15, art. 1, q. 1; Q III, 335b).

<sup>4</sup> "Sed gloriosa Virgo Maria, sicut vivendo et concipiendo non putruit per corruptelam concupiscentiae actualis; sic moriendo et exspirando non putruit per poenam incinerationis et vermis; et hoc quidem convenientissimum erat integerrimis et incorruptis visceribus uteri virginalis" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Nativitate Mariae. Sermo V; Q IX, 715).

<sup>5</sup> "Ponit ergo beata Virgo specialem perfectionis modum in caelesti civitate; unde hierarchiam perficiendum praecellit; et ob hoc clamant in Canticis: *Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?* Et hinc constare potest, quod corporaliter ibi est; [...] patet, (quod) hic modus perfectionis ibi non esset, nisi corporaliter ibi esset" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae (15 Augusti). Sermo I: Q IX, 690a).

<sup>6</sup> "Item, hoc colligitur sic: Cum enim dicitur *innixa super dilectum suum et deliciis affluens* propter consummatam eius beatitudinem; et beatitudo non esset consummata, nisi personaliter ibi esset, et persona non sit anima, sed coniunctum: patet, quod secundum coniunctum, id est corpus et animam, ibi est; alioquin consummatam non haberet fruitionem" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae (15 Augusti). Sermo I: Q IX, 690a).

<sup>7</sup> "Hunc autem actum beata Virgo habet in subiectas sibi hierarchias Angelorum et hominum; unde congrue appellatur Maria *amarum mare*, quia purgat; *illuminatrix*, quia illuminat; *Domina*, quia perficit et consummat. Est igitur elevata super hierarchiam *angelicam* purgantem, illuminantem, perficientem, et super hierarchiam *humanam* purgandam, illuminandam, perficiendam" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae (15 Augusti). Sermo I: Q IX, 689b).

sermon he goes on to point out that Mary, by being assumed into heaven, is elevated above the perfecting hierarchy, that is, above the angels, whose desire is the perfection of the heavenly city.<sup>8</sup>

In the second sermon on the Assumption, Bonaventure says that the phrase from the Book of Wisdom which refers to being more beautiful than the sun and superior to the stars prefigures the Virgin Mary: in fact, being assumed into heaven as glorious Empress, she is exalted by God above all the inhabitants of heaven and is excellently distinguished as a noble Lady by her perfect beauty, her super-excellent nobility and the clarity of her wisdom.<sup>9</sup>

The Seraphic Doctor explains this assertion, clarifying that Mary is distinguished as to her perfect beauty, because she is designated as more beautiful than the sun; she is distinguished as to her excellent nobility, because she is placed above all the stars, that is, the saints; and she is distinguished as to the clarity of her wisdom, because Mary is designated as enlightened more appropriately than the other creatures.<sup>10</sup>

The Master of Bagnoregio then insists on proclaiming the super-excellence of the Virgin in her Assumption, when, interpreting the well-known question of the Song of Solomon “Who is that coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?” (Song 8:5. NRSVCE), he emphasizes that Mary has become more noble than all the saints as regards the influx of delights, with which she distills delights on all the saints, not only as regards her soul, but as regards her body also, glorified when her soul is assumed into heaven.<sup>11</sup>

The Seraphic Doctor then goes on to proclaim the exaltation of the Virgin in heaven, pointing out that she is noble by the excellence of her dignity above all the saints, for, as Mother of the heavenly Emperor, she is the noblest of all creatures and has been deservedly placed on a sublime throne at the right hand of her Son.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, in his third sermon on the Assumption, St. Bonaventure insists on the honors which the Virgin receives at her Assumption, beginning with the principal honor, which is that of being

<sup>8</sup> “Est etiam elevata super hierarchiam *perficientem*; [...] id est. angelicorum spirituum, quorum desiderium est perfectio civitatis caelestis” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae (15 Augusti). Sermo I: Q IX, 690a).

<sup>9</sup> “Est enim haec speciosior sole et super omnem dispositionem stellarum, luci comparata, invenitur prior, Sapientiae septimo. In verbis istis Imperatrix gloriosa, super choros supernorum civium sublimata commendatur a Spiritu sancto quantum ad assumptionem suam commendatione perfecta; commendatur autem quantum ad tria, quae aliquam nobilem dominam excellentissime commendabilem reddunt, quae quidem sunt *perfecta speciositas, superexcellens nobilitas et sapientiae claritas*” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo II; Q IX, 691a).

<sup>10</sup> “Quantum ad perfectam *speciositatem* commendatur hic, cum sole *speciosior* nuncupatur; quantum ad excellentem *nobililatem*, cum stellis omnibus, id est universis Sanctis, sublimius et altius collocatur; sed quantum ad sapientiae *claritatem*, cum *luci* aeternae sapientiae *comparata*, propius omnibus creaturis dicitur illustrata” (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo II; Q IX, 691a).

<sup>11</sup> “Super omnes igitur Sanctos dicitur esse facta nobilior et sublimis quantum ad *deliciarum affluentiam*, quibus super omnes Sanctos singulariter affluebat; propter quod admirantes Angeli in sua assumptione dicebant: *Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto, deliciis affluens, innixa super dilectum suum?* Canticorum octavo. Iste *deliciis* super Sanctorum collegium affluebat non solum quantum ad animam, verum etiam quantum ad corpus proprium, quod pie glorificatum in assumptione animae esse creditur et probatur” (Ibid., 692a).

<sup>12</sup> “Super omnes Sanctos nihilominus facta est nobilis quantum ad *dignitatis* sive generis *excellentiam*; ipsa enim genere et dignitate, cum sit Mater Imperatoris altissimi, est omnium creaturarum nobilissima; et idcirco super omnem creaturam et ad dexteram Filii sui fuit non immerito exaltata et in solio sublimissimo collocata; quod optime tertii Regum secundo fuit praefiguratum” (Ibid.).



preceded by the Supreme King of Heaven and by a solemn procession of the entire heavenly cohort. He expresses it that way:

The angels fly ahead to see their Lady; the patriarchs leap down to see their daughter; the apostles flock to see their teacher; the martyrs hasten to see their exhorter; the married and the widowed run to see their companion and sister; the nuns gather to see their prelate and abbess.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, St. Bonaventure maintains in his third sermon on the Assumption that the Mother of God was solemnly exalted at her assumption with these four honors: a magnificent exit to meet her, because the King went out to meet his mother; a sweet reception, because he adored her and embraced her; a worthy enthronement, because they placed the throne of the King's mother; an immediate approach, because she sat at his right hand.<sup>14</sup>

Explaining these ideas, the Seraphic Doctor says that the Creator granted Mary, when she was assumed into heaven, an honorary reception that surpassed in excellence that of other creatures. In fact, the whole Trinity came to receive the Virgin with joy and glory, recognizing her as the spouse of chaste love, the royal hall of the holy residence, the office of the admirable operation.<sup>15</sup>

The theologian of Bagnoregio explains this assertion by pointing out that God the Father recognized Mary as the house of his majesty, God the Son recognized her as the beginning of his humanity and his humility, and the Holy Spirit recognized her as the sanctuary of his goodness, in which the charisms of graces were fully founded, in whose universal granary he gathered the wheat of the gifts so that they would reach the poor in times of need. Moreover, the biblical phrase "The king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her" (1 Kings 2:19. NRSVCE) must be applied to Christ, because, leaving his throne, he moved the entire structure of the celestial empire to give a gift to his mother.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "I. Primus ergo honor est *obviatio summi Regis*. Omnino enim credendum est et nullatenus dubitandum, quin hodie solemnī processione obvium sit Virgini ascendenti non solum a Rege, verum etiam a tota *curia caelesti*. — Praevolant Angeli videre dominam suam; desiliunt Patriarchae videre filiam suam; occurrunt Apostoli videre magistrā suam; accelerant Martyres videre exhortatricem suam; irruunt maritatae et viduae aspicere sociam et sororem suam; confluunt consorores videre praelatam et abbatissam suam" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 693b).

<sup>14</sup> "Quatuor honores describuntur in verbis propositis, quibus hodie Mater Dei, Maria, in sua assumptione fuit solemniter honorata; et hi sunt: magnifica *obviatio*, quia *surrexit rex in occursum matris*; dulcissima atque blandissima *receptio*, quia *adoravit eam*; littera Iosephi dicit: *et amplexatus est eam*; dignissima *in-thronizatio*, ibi: *positusque est thronus matri regis*; immediata *locatio* sive propinquatio, ibi: *et sedit ad dexteram eius*" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 693b).

<sup>15</sup> "Verum quidquid reverentiae ipsae conferant creaturae, nihil est comparatione superexcellētis honoris, quem confert ei Creator. Occurrit enim tota Trinitas, etsi non motu locali, tamen influenza favorabili, laetitia principali et gloria deiformi. Tota siquidem beata Trinitas te cognovit, Maria, *sponsam* castae dilectionis, *aulam* sanctae inhabitationis, *officinam* mirae operationis" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 693b-694a).

<sup>16</sup> "Cognovit beatam Mariam Pater domum suae maiestatis; [...] recognovit Filius principium suae humanitatis sive humilitatis; recognovit Spiritus sanctus sacrarium suae bonitatis, in quo plenissime et absque mensura charismata condidit gratiarum, in quo scilicet *horreo* publico et universali congregavit frumenta donorum, ut tempore necessitatis ad pauperes pervenirent; [...] Sed de Christo, Filio eius, proprie intelligitur quod dicitur: *Surrexit rex in occursum matris*. Exsiliens enim de solio suo, totam imperii machinam in Matris obsequium movit" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 694a).

In another passage of this sermon, St. Bonaventure insists that the third honor reserved by God to the Virgin when entering heaven is her worthy enthronement on the throne that he prepared for her.<sup>17</sup> He then explains that the fourth honor granted by God to Mary by placing her at the right hand of the King is due to three essential reasons. The first is the immediacy of love from heart to heart, in the sense that, there being no separation between the heart of Mary and that of God, there should be no separation between both thrones, that of God the Son and that of his Mother.<sup>18</sup> The second reason is to frequently intercede for sinners, because it is not convenient for the intercessor and the reconciler to sit at a distance, but that they should come closer laterally, and even coincide from ear to ear.<sup>19</sup> As a third reason for the royal glorification of Mary at the side of Christ, the Seraphic Doctor alleges that of patriarchy, according to this explanation: by patriarchal hierarchy Adam, among men, and Eve, among women, were destined to sit at the right hand of God; but that hierarchy was transferred to Christ and Mary, because, just as Adam and Eve were the destroyers of mankind, Christ and Mary were its restorers.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Conclusions

St. Bonaventure accepts the common belief that Mary died before her assumption into heaven for two reasons: because it was not fitting that Mary should be immortal, when her son Christ died; also, because Mary's death was a consequence of the guilt of original sin, with which she was contaminated at her conception.

Bonaventure adds that, just as Mary did not decay with the corruption of concupiscence while living and conceiving, so she did not disintegrate and turn into ashes when dying, since this privilege was most fitting for her incorrupt virginal womb. He did not think necessary to make any explicit declaration or any argument for it. Although he does not prove it with arguments, our author takes the resurrection of Mary to be undeniable, since it is an indispensable condition for her bodily assumption into heaven.

The Seraphic Doctor proposes as the essential reason for Mary's bodily Assumption into heaven her perfect happiness, in the sense that, for Mary's happiness to be perfect in her assumption, it is necessary that not only her soul be glorified, but also her body.

<sup>17</sup> "III. *Positus est thronus matri eius*. Hic est tertius honor dignissimae *intronizationis*. Et cum *thronus* sit aeternae regalis celsitudinis, nihil aliud est dicere: *Positus est thronus*, quam: *rex accepit uxorem et voluit esse reginam*, et merito" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 694b).

<sup>18</sup> "IV. *Et sedit ad dexteram eius*. Hic est quartus honor: *immediata locatio circa Regem*. Et sunt ad hoc tres rationes: prima est *immediatio amoris* cordis ad cor. Sicut enim nihil fuit medium inter cor Virginis et Deum, ita nihil medium inter thronum et thronum" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 695a).

<sup>19</sup> "Secunda ratio est *frequenter interpellandi* pro peccatoribus. Habentem enim interpellatricis et reconciliatricis officium non oportet longe sedere, sed prope assistere et quasi lateraliter appropinquare, immo auriculariter cohaerere, ne forte contra suos commendatores crudelis dictetur sententia, et si dictata fuerit, irritetur" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 695a).

<sup>20</sup> "Tertia ratio est, quia *patriarchatus*, quem habuisset Adam in numero virorum et Eva in numero feminarum, ut sederet ad dexteram Dei, id est in *potioribus bonis*, translatus est ad Christum et Mariam, Matrem eius, quia, sicut illi fuerunt peremptores humani generis, ita isti fuerunt reparatores" (Bonaventura de Balneoregio, De Assumptione B. Virginis Mariae. Sermo III; Q IX, 695a).



St. Bonaventure states that, by being assumed into heaven as glorious Empress, Mary is exalted by God above all the inhabitants of heaven and is made to stand out as a noble Lady by her perfect beauty, her super-excellent nobility and the clarity of her wisdom.

Finally, the Master of Bagnoregio assures that the Mother of God was solemnly exalted in her assumption through four honors: a magnificent exit to meet her by her Son the King; a sweet reception, because He embraced her; a worthy enthronement, because they placed the throne of the King's mother next to his; an immediate approach, because she sat at the right hand of her divine Son.

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