



# Adsum

*Adsum* is published by the seminarians of **Mater Dei Seminary** for the enjoyment of our families, friends, and benefactors.

## LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

This month we celebrate the feast of the glorious Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven. As the featured article for this issue of our newsletter, I would like to focus on the Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, in which he defined this dogma of our Faith. There is a wealth of considerations contained in this papal document.

On a historical note, the papal pronouncement was made on November 1, 1950, in the presence of a vast number of cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests, religious, and laity. For a perpetual memorial of this occasion, the names of the members of the hierarchy, who were present, were written in marble above one of the entrances of the great facade of St. Peter's in Rome. Among those names is that of the Apostolic Delegate for Vietnam, Bishop Peter Martin Ngo Diem Thuc, from whom our priests and I derive our Holy Orders.

As we study the Apostolic Constitution on the Assumption we find that prior to Pope Pius XII's defining the dogma, he made inquiry to the totality of Catholic bishops throughout the world on May 1, 1946:

*"Do you, Venerable Brethren, in your outstanding wisdom and prudence, judge that the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin can be proposed and defined as a dogma of faith? Do you, with your clergy and people desire it?"*

Pope Pius XII made reference to the bishops' response

in his Apostolic Constitution:

*"But those whom 'the Holy Ghost has placed as bishops to rule the Church of God' (Acts 20:28) gave an almost unanimous affirmative response to both of these questions."*

And he continued: *"Certainly, this teaching authority of the Church, not by any mere human effort but under the protection of the Spirit of Truth, and therefore absolutely without error, carries out the commission entrusted to it, that of preserving the revealed truths, pure and entire throughout every age, in such a way that it presents them undefiled, adding nothing to them and taking nothing away from them."*



*For, as the Vatican Council teaches, 'the Holy Ghost was not promised to the successors of Peter in such a way that, by His revelation, they might manifest new doctrine, but so that, by His assistance, they might guard as sacred and might faithfully propose the revelation delivered through the Apostles or the deposit of faith.'"*

We have here an important consideration for those

traditional Catholics who correctly reject the false teachings of Vatican II on ecumenism, religious liberty, and the nature of the Church of Christ; yet, incorrectly recognize the “magisterium” which has authoritatively and universally proposed these pernicious errors.

How wonderfully did the Catholic Church throughout the centuries recognize this privilege of Mary’s Assumption into Heaven.

In the liturgical books, we find set forth expressions testifying to Our Lady’s Assumption. In the Sacramentary sent by Pope Adrian I to the Emperor Charlemagne we find these words: *“Venerable to us, O Lord, is the festivity of this day on which the holy Mother of God suffered temporal death, but still could not be kept down by the bonds of death, who has begotten Thy Son Our Lord incarnate from herself.”*

Another example is in the Gallican Sacramentary: *“an ineffable mystery all the more worthy of praise as the Virgin’s Assumption is something unique among men.”*

A further illustration is contained in the Byzantine Liturgy: *“God, the King of the universe, has granted thee favors that surpass nature. As He kept thee a virgin in childbirth, thus He has kept thy body incorrupt in the tomb and has glorified it by His divine act of transferring it from the tomb.”*

Pope St. Sergius I prescribed what is known as the litany, or the stationary procession and specified the feasts of the Nativity, the Annunciation, the Purification, and the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*. Pope St. Leo IV prescribed a vigil before this feast celebrated by the title of the *“Assumption of the Blessed Mother of God.”*

Numerous references for Our Lady’s Assumption can be found from the writings of the saints and the doctors of the Church; namely, St. John Damascene, St. Albert the Great, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Francis de Sales, and St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Pope Pius XII recognized this in his Apostolic Constitution: *“All these proofs and considerations of the holy Fathers and the theologians are based upon the Sacred Writings as their ultimate foundation.”*

St. John Damascene eloquently compared Mary’s

bodily Assumption with her other prerogatives and privileges:

*“It was fitting that she, who had kept her virginity intact in childbirth, should keep her own body free from all corruption even after death. It was fitting that she, who had carried the Creator as a child at her breast, should dwell in the divine tabernacles. It was fitting that the spouse, whom the Father had taken to Himself, should live in the divine mansions. It was fitting that she, who had seen her Son upon the Cross and who had thereby received into her heart the sword of sorrow which she had escaped in the act of giving birth to Him, should look upon Him as He sits with the Father. It was fitting that God’s Mother should possess what belongs to her Son, and that she should be honored by every creature as the Mother and as the Handmaid of God.”*

In his sermon on the feast of the Assumption, St. Anthony of Padua preached: *“Hence it is that the holy Psalmist writes: ‘Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified’.”*

He further asserted that just as Jesus Christ has risen from the death over which He triumphed and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, so likewise the ark of His sanctification *“has risen up, since on this day the Virgin Mother has been taken up to her heavenly dwelling.”*

St. Robert Bellarmine exclaimed: *“And who, I ask, could believe that the ark of holiness, the dwelling place of the Word of God, the temple of the Holy Ghost, could be reduced to ruin? My soul is filled with horror at the thought that this virginal flesh which had begotten God, had brought Him into the world, had nourished and carried Him, could have been turned into ashes or given over to be food for worms.”*

St. Francis de Sales asserted: *“What son would not bring his mother back to life and would not bring her into paradise after her death if he could?”*

St. Alphonsus Liguori wrote: *“Jesus did not wish to have the body of Mary corrupted after death, since it would have redounded to His own dishonor to have her virginal flesh, from which He Himself had assumed flesh, reduced to dust.”*

Furthermore, Pope Pius XII especially emphasized God's words to Satan found in Genesis 3:15 "I will put enmities between thee and the woman" and the teachings of the Fathers of the Church who designated Mary the new Eve: "*We must remember especially that, since the Second Century, the Virgin Mary has been designated by the holy Fathers as the new Eve, who, although subject to the new Adam, is most intimately associated with Him in that struggle against the infernal foe which, as foretold in the protoevangelium (Gen. 3:15), would finally result in that most complete victory over the sin and death which are always mentioned together in the writings of the Apostle of the Gentiles (Rom. chapters 5 and 6; 1 Cor. 15, 21-26, 54-*

*57). Consequently, just as the glorious resurrection of Christ was an essential part and the final sign of this victory, so that struggle which was common to the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son should be brought to a close by the glorification of her virginal body, for the same Apostle says: 'when this mortal thing hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.'* (1 Cor. 15:54)."

Let us celebrate this great feast of our Holy Mother and be ever mindful of our powerful Mediatrix before the throne of God!

With my prayers and blessing,

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

---

## *Assumption Prayer*

Composed by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII

*O Immaculate Virgin, Mother of God and Mother of Men.*

*We believe with all the fervor of our Faith in thy triumphal Assumption, both in body and soul, into Heaven, where thou art acclaimed as Queen by all the choirs of Angels and all the legions of the Saints; And we unite with them to praise and bless the Lord Who hast exalted thee above all other pure creatures, and to offer thee the tribute of our devotion and our love.*

*We know that thy gaze, which on earth watched over the humble and suffering humanity of Jesus, in Heaven is filled with the vision of that Humanity glorified, and with the vision of uncreated Wisdom, and that the joy of thy soul in the direct contemplation of the adorable Trinity causes thy heart to throb with overwhelming tenderness;*

*And we, poor sinners, whose body weighs down the flight of the soul, beg thee to purify our hearts so that, while we remain here below, we may learn to see God and God alone in the beauties of His creatures.*

*We trust that thy merciful eyes may deign to glance down upon our miseries and our sorrows; upon our struggles and our weaknesses; that thy countenance may smile upon our joys and our victories; that thou mayest hear the voice of Jesus saying to thee of each*

*one of us, as He once said to thee of His beloved disciple: behold thy son.*

*And we, who call upon thee as our Mother, we like John, take thee as the guide, strength and consolation of our mortal life.*

*We are inspired by the certainty that thine eyes, which wept over the earth watered by the blood of Jesus, are yet turned toward this world, held in the clutches of wars, persecutions, oppression of the just and the weak;*

*And from the shadows of this vale of tears, we seek in thy Heavenly assistance and tender mercy comfort for our aching hearts and help in the trials of the Church and of our fatherland.*

*We believe, finally, that in the glory where thou reignest, clothed with the sun and crowned with the stars, thou art, after Jesus, the joy and gladness of all the Angels and of all the Saints;*

*And from this earth, over which we tread as pilgrims, comforted by our faith in future resurrection, we look to thee, our life, our sweetness and our hope; draw us onward with the sweetness of thy voice that one day, after our exile, thou mayest show us Jesus, the Blessed Fruit of thy womb, O Clement, O Loving, O Sweet Virgin Mary.*

# *Father Connell Answers Moral Questions*

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

## **Oaths in Legal Documents**

**Question:** Sometimes in legal documents formulas appear, which seem to indicate that the person who signs them is attesting the truth of his statement with an oath. Such are the formulas: “I swear” ... “Under penalty of perjury I declare” ... “I, being duly sworn in, do attest.”

Are such formulas to be understood as expressing that the one signing the document is by that very fact taking an oath? If such be the case, of course even a slight deviation from the truth, when deliberate, is a mortal sin of perjury.

**Answer:** In order that a person may take an oath it is necessary: (1) that the formula which is employed indicate that he is calling God to witness the truth of his assertion, and (2) that he have the intention of taking an oath (cf. Prummer, *Manuale theologiae moralis* [Friburg Bris-gov., 1936], II, n. 441). Now, of the three formulas proposed by the questioner the first would seem to fulfil the former condition, but the other two would not. When a person says in court or writes in a legal document: “I swear,” he implicitly calls on God as a witness. For, the first meaning of “swear” in Funk and Wagnall’s Standard Dictionary is “to utter or affirm solemnly, with an appeal to God or something held sacred.” The other two formulas would not seem to suffice as valid expressions for calling on God as a witness. For “under penalty of perjury I declare” merely means that the one who pronounces or writes this formula declares that he recognizes that he is liable to the severe penalties due to perjury if he is convicted of falsehood; he does not say that he is actually taking an oath. The formula: “I being duly sworn in, do attest” is a statement that one has taken an oath, but of itself is not an oath.

If the intention of taking an oath is lacking, there is no oath, and consequently, the sin of perjury is not committed by making a false statement. However, even one who withholds his intentions, while using a formula expressive of an oath, is guilty of a grave sin of irreverence if he knowingly attests what is false (however unimportant it may be), because “it is always a grave insult to call on God even externally as a witness to falsehood” (Damen, *Theologia moralis* [Turin, 1947], I, n. 466).

Hence, the person who signs a legal document containing the expression “I swear” would be guilty of grave sin in the event that he deliberately incorporates falsehood in the document. If, however, the other expressions noted above are used, the morality of false statements would be judged by the norms of veracity and justice. For the benefit of persons who, for one reason or another, do not wish to take an oath in court or in a legal document, it is well to remember that our laws always permit a person to “affirm” instead of taking an oath, in order that the consciences of those persons who regard an oath as unlawful may be safeguarded. It is true, the penalty for prevarication is the same in either case; but in the tribunal of conscience one who makes a false statement after “affirming” is not guilty of perjury, nor is he necessarily guilty of a mortal sin of lying.

*Adsum*, a publication by the seminarians of **MATER DEI SEMINARY** for the reading enjoyment of friends and benefactors, is sent free of charge to all who request it. If you are interested, please provide your name and mailing address to:

**MATER DEI SEMINARY**  
7745 Military Avenue  
Omaha NE 68134-3356