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## Heaven is found within God's love, pope says

By [Catholic News Service](#)

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy (CNS) -- Heaven is not a location in the cosmos, but a place within God where those who believe in him will enjoy his love forever, Pope Benedict XVI said.

Celebrating an early morning Mass Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption of Mary, the pope said that when the Catholic Church affirms that Mary was taken, body and soul, into heaven, it is not referring "to some place in the universe, a star or something like that."

"With the term 'heaven,' we want to affirm that God -- the God who made himself close to us -- does not abandon us even in and beyond death, but he has a place for us and gives us eternity; we want to affirm that within God there is a place for us," the pope said.

Pope Benedict celebrated the Mass in the parish Church of St. Thomas, just across the main square from the papal villa in Castel Gandolfo. A few hours after the Mass, he led the recitation of the Angelus prayer with visitors gathered in the courtyard of the villa.

At the Mass and at the Angelus, the pope said that in November the church will celebrate the 60th anniversary of Pope Pius XII's solemn proclamation of the dogma of Mary's assumption.

"We believe that Mary, like Christ her son, already has defeated death and triumphs now in heavenly glory with the totality of her being, 'soul and body,'" he said at the Mass.

In addition, he said, the church affirms that the heavenly glory Mary already enjoys is promised to all believers as well.

"To understand this reality a bit, we can look at our own lives. All of us have had the experience of someone dying, but continuing to live in a way in the memory and heart of those who knew and loved him or her," the pope said.

With God, who created and loves each person, someone who dies is not just a fond memory, but continues to exist fully, he said.

"Our serenity, hope and peace is based precisely on this: In God, in his thoughts and his love, we will survive, not just as a 'shadow' of ourselves; but in him and in his creative love, we are protected and led into eternity with our whole lives and our whole beings," the pope said.

God's love is what defeats the power of death and brings eternal life "and it is this love that we call 'heaven,'" he said.

"Nothing that is precious and dear to us will fall to ruin, but rather it will find its fullness in God," he said.

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