

The Ascension of the Lord



The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord is a day to think about heaven. Firstly we remember that Jesus 'was taken up to heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place.' We think too of our place in heaven: 'There are many rooms in my Father's house...I am going to prepare a place for you.' The basis for our hope in heaven is summed up in the Preface of today's Mass: 'Christ is the beginning, the head of the Church, where he has gone, we hope to follow.'

In our daily living we all need some purpose or ambition to give us the motivation to get up and start, the energy to persevere, and a sense of satisfaction in identifying targets and attaining them. We need a goal which will continue to have meaning even after death. For most of us, Heaven is that goal and the source of meaning.

The image of 'eternal rest' might strike us, especially the activists among us, as very boring! Eternal rest means the repose and fulfilment of all energies in the wonder of God.

Sometimes we are presented with the image of Jesus ascending to heaven accompanied by angelic brass bands with great triumph. But the real glorification of Jesus was in his total return to the Father.

If heaven is our eternal goal it will bring us to a sense of total unity: a) unity within ourselves to end all the contradictions and tensions between our hot and cold feelings, our ideals and failures, our makings and breakings; b) unity with others, particularly being reunited with our loved ones who have gone before us; c) unity with God, that is total oneness in the Risen Lord who is one with the Father in the love and power of the Holy Spirit.

While we are in this life we will always feel incomplete and restless. Our prayer today might be the same one as Saint Augustine: 'For you made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.'