



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

The Ascension – Our hope of Heaven

Readings: Acts 1:1-11, Ps 46, Ephesians 1:17-23, Luke 24:46-53

One of the greatest things about the Christian Faith is that it takes human beings utterly seriously.

It does not see them as mere agglomerations of molecules, as the secular materialist must.

It does not artificially spiritualise them away from their very fleshy created reality.

It does not see them as mere 'judgement fodder' for or the playthings of an angry and distant god or gods.

The Christian Gospel understands, from the Creation narrative onwards, that Man is created in the image of God and, as such, has an eternal destiny.

What precludes him from taking up this inheritance is sin, his fallen nature. It is this that prevents him from the Paradise of Eden, barred by

the flaming sword of the Cherubim, and from the companionship of and communion with God.

Because Christ, God the Son Himself, has taken on our humanity, yet without sin – due to the divine intervention in the incarnation and the immaculacy of Mary. He has taken that humanity through death and into Risen life and therefore we have hope that, as long as our humanity is lodged in Christ and He in us, we may yet participate in that victory over our final enemy, death, and enter, restored, reconciled and purified, the courts of Heaven.

It is, quite simply, the most stupendous vision of God's purposes for His beloved creature, Man, and the hope that is beyond the wildest imaginings of Man.

The Ascension, celebrated in these distant isles three days later than Scripture and Tradition reasonably suggest, is the climax of this vision for the future of Man and the divine earnest of its fulfilment.

In the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ from the Bethany Road, we witness the crucified and bodily risen Lord, whose presence and corporeal reality has been attested by hundreds of disciples over forty days, taken back into Heaven.

We do not see the elevation of an idea.

We do not observe the spiritual re-absorption of some ghostly revelation.

We are, through the disciples – of whom we are but the latest generation, witnesses of the translation of humanity in Christ, lifted forever into the Presence of the Father.

The full bodily Resurrection of Man is something of a stumbling block for many modern minds – as it was indeed for many ancient minds. They prefer to spiritualise the events of salvation.

BUT THAT WILL NOT DO.

The whole point of MAN is that he is a creature of earth, a creation of God out of the very dust. Even so, God intends him to be ‘in His image’ and destined for eternity and absolute holiness and incorporation into the Divine Life.

Mere transmigration of the soul does not begin to cover it. God in Christ is about redeeming the totality of Man. We are both physical and spiritual creatures and therefore our redemption is ‘both spiritual and physical’.

Our very identity is respected by our Creator who, through the Word made flesh, His only Son, inhabits the totality of our humanity.

It is why the Gospels report the Risen and Ascended Christ as with a body, transformed but tangible, credible and corporeal.

The whole Man is redeemed, raised up and fitted for eternity.

It is why, for centuries, Catholics rejected incineration of the body at death as a pagan activity.

It is why Catholics stand by the physical integrity of every human being from conception to natural death.

It is why Catholics take absolutely seriously how we behave with our bodies in every human encounter from the most tangential to the most intimate.

It is why we built hospitals and schools from earliest missionary times.

It is why we defend the unborn and the handicapped.

It is why we revere the sacrament of marriage.

The body for Man is not a bolt on extra or a shed for the soul. It is part of the identity and integrity of who we are. It is an integral part of who we are and, in Christ, the whole person will be raised up, purified and presented before the judgement seat of the Father.

It is because Christ is truly and completely risen from the dead that we can meet here and celebrate the Mass.

We do not receive a 'holy biscuit' and a sip of 'wonder wine'. We receive the true Body and Blood of Christ – Crucified, Risen, Ascended, Glorified.

Only by His Rising and Ascending with our and His humanity into the Heavens, into the eternity of the Father, can that very Body and Blood be both eternal and ubiquitous – wherever Mass is celebrated that now, eternal and unending gift is given.

Jesus comes to us in the most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

Without the Ascension that could not be so.

Without the Ascension our hope of Heaven would be gone.