



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## **The Ascension of the Lord**

### ***APOTHEOSIS***

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

Those of you who have ever visited the Anglican Shrine at Walsingham will be familiar with the Chapel of the Ascension. It takes a rather literalist view of the matter and is decorated with a pair of feet (presumably Jesus') sticking through a puff of cloud in the ceiling.

What is it then that we celebrate on this peculiar day?

First of all it is the completion of Christ's earthly ministry. The event on the Bethany road is also the essential precursor to the beginning of the Church. Charles Williams, the great Anglican mystic, wrote this in his book, 'The Descent of the Dove': 'The beginning of Christendom is at a point out of time. A metaphysical trigonometry finds it among the spiritual secrets, at the meeting of two heavenward lines, one drawn from Bethany along the line of the Ascent of the Messiah, the other from Jerusalem along the descent of the Holy Spirit. That measurement, the measurement of eternity in operation, of the bright cloud and the rushing wind, is, in effect, theology.'

What we observe in the Ascent is the immediate removal of the Risen

Christ from the particular and local – not to become a ‘god’ *in absentia* but rather one whose availability is universal and ubiquitous. Geography no longer restricts the Ministry of the Christ.

As significant, for the hope of Man, is that the Risen Christ ascends in the full glory of His triumphant divinity but also in the perfection of His humanity. This divinity and humanity, in which, via the sacramental life of the Church, we participate is the very ground of our faith and our confidence in our eternal destiny. The New Adam, Christ Jesus, restores Man from exile to the Paradise of God and via His divinity makes possible the eternity of Man in God. The technical term you will find in the Fathers is the ancient term APOTHEOSIS.

To be deified, the image of God in Man now become a living reality. This is the destiny of the saints – to become Holy as our Father is holy, to become deified, purified by the fire of God’s love and thus fit for eternity with Him. The Ascension is not a strange story told to tidy up some loose ends but rather the essential conclusion in time and for eternity of the history of salvation and our hope for eternal life.