



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

## THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

### ***Ascension Day 2024***

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

The death of Jesus, His Resurrection from the dead and his Ascension into Heaven have received historical attention from various other religions. The variety of stories woven to avoid and deny the Gospel account – what would the Apostles know, they were only eye-witnesses? - is legion - Fringe eccentric gnostic , like the late Andreas Faber-Kaiser, made up fantasies about Jesus’ survival and unpublicised return to his native Kashmir where he died and was buried. At the more serious end of the scale, in Islam, The Koran acknowledges the Ascension but as part of its account which avoids the Crucifixion. The narrative in Mohammed’s teaching is that Jesus, the penultimate prophet, was smuggled out from the Via Dolorosa and replaced by Simon of Cyrene whom God altered to look like Jesus. Jesus then ascended to God and will return at the end of time to beat the False Messiah, marry, have kids, reign for 40 years - during which time He will destroy the religion of the Cross and put to death all those who do not repent of following it - then die.

This is, as you will note, somewhat different from the concept of those

closest to Jesus and eye-witnesses of His life, Death and Resurrection. But for many modern Christians the puzzle of the Ascension remains. What did it really look like? Is it a truly physical event or just a metaphor? Is it part of the necessary completion of the mythos of Christ? Or did it really happen and why?

Well, as one who has never bought into the reductionist school of liberal theology, you would not expect me to go down the minimalist road. The Ascension is not a convenient, if rather odd, tidying of the story but rather an essential and conclusive ingredient of the History of Salvation.

The Resurrection appearances are sufficient for the Apostles and Disciples to accept the reality of the defeat of death by Christ. The forty days give that time and space for the encounters and the explanation of that history of salvation which culminates in Christ – see the Road to Emmaus where the Risen Lord details the Old Testament teachings which are about Him.

But then, having defeated death and paid the price of the sin of all mankind in the Atonement of the Sacrifice of the Cross, Christ must ascend for two very powerful reasons if our salvation is to be assured and our apotheosis, our essential divinisation, into eternal life accomplished.

First of all the Ascent takes Man – you and me -, risen in Christ, the God-Man, into the Presence of God in eternity. The return to Eden is

assured. The entrance to the Holy City is thrown open.

Secondly the removal of the Risen Lord from the constraints of time and of geography enable His ubiquity, His divine Presence wherever and whenever. It is on these two pillars that we can confidently assert and know that, however many Masses there are in the world, the Real Presence is just that, REAL.

We know also that, in the translation of Man into the eternal Godhead in Christ, our destiny is assured.

As Catholics, we accept no substitutes.