

The Ascension of the Lord

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Once more the liturgy reminds us of the final moment in Jesus' life among men, his ascension into heaven.

Christ Is Passing By, 117

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It has always seemed logical to me that the most holy humanity of Christ should ascend to the glory of the Father. The ascension has always made me very happy. But I think that the sadness that is particular to the day of the ascension is also a proof of the love that we feel for Jesus Christ, our Lord. He is God made man, perfect man, with flesh like ours, with blood like ours in his veins. Yet he leaves us and goes up to heaven. How can we help but miss his presence?

Christ Is Passing By, 117

Redeem the world with Christ

Christ has gone up to heaven, but he has given to all honest human things a specific capacity to be redeemed... And so I keep on repeating to you

that the world can be made holy. We Christians have a special role to play in sanctifying it. We are to cleanse it from the occasions of sin with which we human beings have soiled it. We are to offer it to our Lord as a spiritual offering, presented to him and made acceptable through his grace and with our efforts. Strictly speaking, we cannot say that there is any noble human reality that does not have a supernatural dimension, for the divine Word has taken on a complete human nature and consecrated the world with his presence and with the work of his hands. The great mission that we have received in baptism is to redeem the world with Christ. We are urged on by the charity of Christ to take upon our shoulders a part of this task of saving souls.

A great task

A great task awaits us. We cannot remain inactive, because our Lord has told us clearly, Trade till I come. As long as we are awaiting the Lord's return, when he will come to take full possession of his kingdom, we cannot afford to relax. Spreading the kingdom of God isn't only an official task of those members of the Church who represent Christ because they have received sacred powers from him. You are also the body of Christ, says the Apostle, with a specific command to fulfill. (1 Cor 12:27)

There is so much to be done. Is it because in twenty centuries nothing has been done? In these two thousand years much work has been done. I don't think it would be fair or objective to discount, as some people want to do, the accomplishments of those who have gone before us. In two thousand years a great task has been accomplished, and it has often been accomplished very well. On

other occasions there have been mistakes, making the Church lose ground, just as today there is loss of ground, fear and a timid attitude on the part of some, and at the same time no lack of courage and generosity in others. But, whatever the situation, the human race is being continually renewed. In each generation it is necessary to go on with the effort to help men realize the greatness of their vocation as children of God, to teach them to carry out the commandment of love for God and neighbor.

Christ is Passing By, 120-121

The feast of our Lord's ascension also reminds us of another fact. The same Christ, who encourages us to carry out our task in the world, awaits us in heaven as well. In other words, our life on earth, which we love, is not definitive. *We do not have a permanent dwelling place here, but*

we seek that which is to come (Heb 13:14), a changeless home, where we may live forever.

Christ Is Passing By, 126

Let's turn now to the days between the Ascension and Pentecost. As a result of the triumph of Christ's resurrection, the disciples are full of faith; they eagerly await the promised Holy Spirit. They want to stay close to one another, and so we find them *with Mary, the mother of Jesus* (cfr. Acts 1:14), praying as a single family.

Christ Is Passing By, 141

Jesus has gone up to heaven, as we have seen. But a Christian can talk with him, in prayer and in the Eucharist, as the twelve Apostles talked with him. The Christian can come to burn with an apostolic fervor that will lead him to serve, to redeem with Christ, to sow peace and

joy wherever he goes. To serve, that is what apostolate is all about. If we count on our own strength alone, we will achieve nothing in the supernatural order. But if we are God's instruments, we will achieve everything. *I can do all things in him who gives me strength* (Phil 4:13). God, in his infinite goodness, has chosen to use inadequate instruments; and so, the apostle has no other aim than to let the Lord work in him and through him, to put himself totally at God's disposition, allowing him to carry out his work of salvation through creatures, through that soul whom he has chosen.

Christ Is Passing By, 120

In the heart of every single person

I never talk politics. I do not approve of committed Christians in the world forming a political?religious movement. That would be madness, even if it were motivated by a desire

to spread the spirit of Christ in all the activities of men. What we have to do is put God in the heart of every single person, no matter who he is. Let us try to speak then in such a way that every Christian is able to bear witness to the faith he professes by example and word in his own circumstances, which are determined alike by his place in the Church and in civil life, as well as by ongoing events.

By the very fact of being human, a Christian has a full right to live in the world. If he lets Christ live and reign in his heart, he will feel – quite noticeably – the saving effectiveness of our Lord in everything he does. It does not matter what his occupation is, whether his social status is high or low; for what appears to us to be an important achievement can be very low in God's sight; and what we call low or modest can in Christian terms be a summit of holiness and service.

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