

## ASCENSION SUNDAY

Where is Christ? The Creed tells us that He is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. These words are a figure of speech; for he who sits at the right hand is considered to occupy the most honourable place. Being seated there means in possession of royal and supreme power in glory with the Father. How did Jesus ascend? He ascended by His own power. Whereas Elijah was carried to heaven in a fiery chariot and Mary was assumed. Christ ascended into heaven as God and Man.

Why did Jesus ascend?

- 1). He ascended because His mission was finished and His glorious body warranted a place of glory.
- 2). He ascended to possess the kingdom which He had merited by His blood.
- 3). He ascended to prove that His kingdom is not of this world.
- 4). He also ascended into heaven in order to teach us to follow Him in mind and heart.

While we dwell on earth, we should often desire heaven. As pilgrims, homeward bound for heaven we should hope to be numbered among his saints forever - the citizens of heaven. And what will heaven be like? Well in the words of the Christian apologist, C.S Lewis: Heaven is not playing harps: "All the scriptural imagery (harps, crowns gold, etc.) is, of course, a merely symbolic attempt to express the inexpressible. Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people music is the thing known in the present life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God in eternity share His splendour and power and joy. Gold is mentioned to suggest the timelessness of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the preciousness of it."

So we are meant to foster hope in heaven. Hope is a supernatural virtue of the will infused into the soul at baptism. As a virtue, it needs to be exercised, just like our physical muscles in the body need movement lest they wither away. How do we foster hope? We should make acts of hope by praying and thinking about heaven. By the way, the foes or enemies of hope are despair & presumption - depression and presumption (arrogance).

One notable person of great hope, who is a Servant of God, is Elizabeth Leseur. She was born on October 16, 1866 in Paris. Being a noble, or of the aristocracy of France, she married Felix a wealthy doctor. In the early years of their married life, much time and money was spent in the high society of Paris. Being childless the couple were both socially active in diverse ways, Elizabeth in works for the needy, while Felix buried himself in his work and became as an atheist increasingly hostile to Christianity. After Elizabeth's conversion at the age of thirty two, she set about offering up her poor health and suffering for her husband's conversion. Felix would often ridicule and mock her beliefs which made it difficult for her to practise the faith. She had always endured poor health and now, apart from liver and stomach complaints, she was diagnosed with breast cancer. During this period, her prayer life and desire for the sacraments became most important. She offered up all her pain and ailments for his conversion and was told in prayer, that in the end, he would be converted. Eventually, after the treatment had failed, the cancer metastasised, she became bedridden and consequently died in May 1914.

After her death, Felix discovered her journal that, among many things, prophesied his conversion back to the faith. In order to rid himself of such *superstitions*, as he called them, Félix visited Lourdes wanting to medically expose the reports of cures as fraudulent. One day, while passing by the Lourdes Grotto, being bitter within and disgruntled with his life, he experienced a miraculous conversion, and instant of divine grace, that changed him forever. After some time, Félix now a fervent Catholic, sought to rectify his previous lifestyle and often would quote his wife. In time, he entered religious life as a Dominican, and then, was ordained a Catholic priest. Elizabeth had foretold this event in her journal nine years beforehand. Then, in 1934, Fr Felix was instrumental in promoting his wife's beatification process.

In this enduring story of hope, we are reminded that Elizabeth, never gave up and persevered until the end. We note, moreover, that her prayers were heard in this life, but only answered in the next, after her death. So, persevere and never lose hope in Christ, nor in heaven, where he has gone to prepare you a place.