

Message of our Lord's ascension into heaven

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION AND OUR NEW LIFE.

The new Adam and the open door of heaven:

Who can imagine that someone comes back from the airport to his house rejoicing, after bidding farewell to a son or a dear friend, because his son or friend left town?

But what amazes us is that the disciples and whoever with them went back from the Mount of Olives after the ascension of whom they got attached to, and very much loved and left everything for, they came back to Jerusalem with great Joy (Lk.24:52).

They have watched the most marvelous and splendid scene that humanity has ever seen since its creation. The new Adam spread out his hands to bless them, rising in defiance to earth's gravity and ascending, not in a chariot of fire like Elijah, but in wondrous glory. As he was rising to disappear from their sight, two angels appeared proclaiming the good news that he will come launched from heaven to carry them to the bosom of his father (Acts 1:11).

What a great difference between the end of the first Adam and the new Adam. The first one descended to the grave to go back to dust, giving his sons the inheritance of the divine judgment. "You are dust and to dust you shall return,(Gen 3:19). But before the new Adam, the eternal doors open and the heavenly receive him as the first-born of all humanity, the king of kings, who will bring them in, as kings to eternal glory, for each one of them will hear; "You are heaven and to heaven you shall return ".

- What is the secret of our great joy for our Christ's ascension, the head, to heaven?

1+ Returning dignity to mankind far greater than what it was before!

If the first Adam made us decline to dust, so the heavenly made us members of his body. We no longer groan because of our earthly bodies, emotions and potentials. For the heavenly became man having the same body and shared our life on earth. We became proud of what we are in Christ Jesus , in him and by his holy spirit, our bodies, emotions , feelings, minds , souls and deeds are sanctified every second of our life on earth. He changed our earth into heaven and our life into an enjoyable journey towards heaven, walking through him and in his company. Our eyes will never accept anything less than entering into the bosom of his heavenly father.

Although the righteous people dwell on earth, their home is in heaven. (Phil. 3:20) Therefore it's not fitting to tell a righteous man, "you are dust (earthy), to dust you shall return". For the Lord will tell him, as long as he bears the image of the heavenly (1Cor 15:49), "you are heaven and to heaven you shall return".¹ **Origen**

2+ A new experience with our beloved God

Humanity was lamenting its luck, for the first Adam destroyed it, and lost its freedom of will and the capability of sanctifying it. The most that it desired is to calm down God's wrath, or so to speak, to escape it. Now as the heavenly head of the church ascended, we have gained a new experience with God the Father, our Father, the Word of God our savior and his Holy Spirit who renews our nature.

+ In the Father, we see whom who took the initiative to love us and seek our reconciliation with great pleasure, offering his only begotten son as an atonement offering, through it we will have the right to the Father's son-ship through the baptism of water and spirit.

+ We see in Christ Jesus, our bread who came down from heaven and our savior who make us sit with him in the heaven (Eph. 2:6) preparing for us a place and will come to take us as a gorgeous bride featuring his splendor and dwelling for ever with him.

+ We see in his Holy Spirit, that whom who is continuously renewing our nature to erect of us a paradise carrying spiritual fruits, and beautifying us till we become the living icon of Christ.

The spiritual man in the Church is the heaven, but the carnal one is the earth. Therefore, God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, for as the spiritual is serving you, the carnal also serve you through his reformation.²

St. Augustine

3+ Enjoying the right of heavenly citizenship

By his ascension, we enjoy the right of the heavenly citizenship (Phil.3:20). We practice the heavenly language, the language of love, praises and constant thanksgiving and walk as if we are heavenly. Sin, Satan, the evil world and the darkness have no authority over us, as long as we practically enjoy walking in the spirit.

We have a new understanding of God; the heavenly, humanity, the world, eternity, time and ourselves! Our law became heavenly, our true reality is the eternity and our thoughts are heavenly (Col. 3:1). Understand, beloved, that the joy of all joys comes true through all the joy in the trinity who created us according to his image.

St. Augustine

4+ Ascension and our church membership

Through his ascension, the church is no more to us just a human gathering or a social corporate, but heaven's icon. We practice our church membership with every breath of our life, even in the moment of sleep. "I slept but my heart is awake." (Song 5:2)

As the heavenly groom ascended to his dwelling, he sent his holy spirit to his bride, to grant her the fellowship of the heavenly and enjoy the experience of those who have longed for her, coming on the clouds to parade her in a delightful procession into the bridegroom's chamber. Through his ascension, the church got to know that church worship, being the token of the heavenly worship, is to be practiced through tradition

and discipline without confusion (1Cor.14:33), in the spirit and not in the bondage of the letter and its rigidity.

Through his ascension, every church member discovers that his first mission is the fulfillment of the heavenly kingdom of God in his depth, through the grace of God and continuous work and struggle that the whole world, if possible, may enjoy the heavenly thoughts. Saint Paul says in (Col. 3:1); I wish for you to think of the things that carry your thoughts to heaven, the things that pull you away from this world, for your citizenship is in heaven. (phil. 3:20)

He says, make haste to bring all your thoughts to that city in which you are registered as citizens and be determined to do all things that show that you are worthy of your citizenship in heaven.³

St. John Chrysostom

We need to differentiate between those who are earthy and those who are said about them: “But our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. “ (Phil.3:20) Such spirits are not united to the earth, but its whole entirety is in heaven and in heaven it dwells, “where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. “ (Col. 3:1) Their desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better, but it is bound to be in the flesh. (Phil. 1:24, 25)⁴

Origen

5+ Acquiring Christ our heavenly treasure

Through his ascension we realized that – that rich – the creator of heaven and earth, became poor; that through his poverty we became rich. (2Cor. 8:9) He became our riches, our heavenly treasure.

St. Paul says, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels. “ (2Cor. 4:7)

By him we do not suffer hunger, thirst or need, but by him we are satisfied and are overflowing on others. Adhering to him and being united with him, removes from us the feeling of inferiority. Let us not go back to our perversity and watch therefore, that we might make from our earth, a heavenly city that we may say in truth, “But our citizenship is in heaven.”⁵ (Phil. 3:20)

How long are you going to be poor and beggars?

Lift up your eyes to heaven, think of the treasure that is there, mock the gold and learn how to use it. Pleasure is very limited in this present life, for life is full of incidents, so it's like a grain of sand or rather a drop of water in a deep pit. This is the present life in comparison to the life to come.

The problem is not the possession, but it is the usage. You are not an owner here, for as soon as you die, you like it or not, others will take all your goods, and in turn will give it to others.⁶

St. John Chrysostom

6+ Ascension and the divine commandment

The divine commandment was a tough law in man's mind, no one can fulfill it. The commandment in man's understanding is a group of Laws; which he is required to fulfill. Thus often he cries with the psalmist, "For no man living is righteous before Thee. " (Ps. 143:2) "They have all gone astray, they are all alike corrupt, there is none that does good, no, not one. " (Ps. 14:3)

As if God has given us orders to do this and refrain from doing that, and in our weakness we break the law and disobey the orders. By the ascension of the incarnate Logos, the Holy One who is alone without sin, the commandment became in its essence the unity with the Logos, being hid in him, and a struggle led by His Holy Spirit. For this we are veiled by him in God (Col. 3:3) and he became to us; righteousness, holiness and redemption!

The Holy Bible became to us a paradise to enjoy, pick from it the fruits of the spirit and be adorned by the righteousness of Christ holding the image of our creator! The commandment became the map that reveals to us that our life is but a journey of the soul in the body, passing over to heaven in the company of that who is ascending to heaven! Christ, who is the foundation that preceded us to heaven, for there, he is the foundation and the head of the Church, for truly we can say about him, that he is the foundation and the head.

The base, as well as the head, are the beginning. The building is not complete by laying down the foundation only, but when we start to erect a building – considering a huge earthly building – its top rises up. But as for the head or the base, they are founded on solid ground.

That is why Christ, the head of the Church, preceded us to heaven and sat at the right hand of the Father. Likewise man's work, establishing a solid foundation, that he might erect the forthcoming, exceptionally huge temple.

Thus all the events related to Christ, from his birth, growth, harsh insults, his beating and crucifixion, suffering, death and burial...brought the human race to the divine foundation of the heavenly city.⁷

St. Augustine

7+ A new look of virtue

Through the ascension of the word of God, we understood new depths of virtue. Virtues are no longer a group of morals that we abide by to avoid hurting others and keeping the peace and safety of the society, but it's much deeper than that, it is the fellowship of the divine nature through which we enjoy heavenly standard features.

We will mention, as an example, the following virtues:

(1) Obedience:

It's not submission or surrender in humiliation, either to parents, spiritual leaders, at work or in society. But it is an elevation and honor, for it is cleaving to the Lord Jesus Christ who, being the creator, was obedient and submissive to his mother and St.

Joseph. (LK. 2:51) He, as the only begotten Son, who is one in essence with the Father, obeyed with pleasure till death; death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8)

(2) **Giving alms:**

It's not mere material or moral giving, driven by mere emotions, but it's a true love offered to the Lord Christ for all mankind, even those who resist the believer, who sees in every person the Lord Jesus Christ, the lover of mankind and savior of all. He considers giving alms an honor that he does not deserve and also compassion from God who accept it from his hands.

(3) **Fasting:**

It's not abstaining from food and drink, but it's a revelation of the heavenly love, as the believer feels that he doesn't want to be occupied, even with the necessities, because he is beholding the heavenly, who dwells in him.

(4) **Purity:**

It's not suppression of the desires and deprivation of the emotion, but it's directing the believer's entire energy, to find satisfaction in the heavenly.

(5) **Meekness:**

It's not self contempt or despising the mind and hiding the talents and abilities, but cherishing the heavenly who is working in him. So the believer offers continual thanksgiving to God who works in him and through him, saying with the apostle, "I can do all things in Christ Jesus who strengthen me." (Phil. 4:13)

+ Virtue, as Origen says, "Is the Lord Christ himself dwelling in us".

+ Whosoever does the commandments of God, his soul cleaves to God; but whosoever violates it, his soul will stick to the dust and wallows in the earthly and becomes earthy. Therefore in the tenth chapter of Deuteronomy it says, "You shall fear the lord your God; you shall serve him and cleave to him."⁸
(Deut. 10:20)

Onesimus, Bishop of Jerusalem

+ It's very beneficial to read the Bible, for it makes the soul wise, and directs the spirit towards heaven. It also moves men towards thanksgiving and destroys the desire for earthly things, and let our minds meditate always on the other world.⁹

St. John Chrysostom

+8 Ascension and enjoying the heavenly atmosphere

By the ascension of our Christ to heaven, he lifted up our hearts with him, so that his joy might become the food for our souls at all circumstances. Even in the midst of suffering, God's peace, joy of the spirit, and rejoicing, never depart from us.

9+ A new understanding to the gift of suffering and death

Through the ascension of the Lord Christ, the crucified **whom he** died and rose, pain and death are no more a sign of God's wrath or the fall into sin. For our Christ suffered for his sacrificial love for the sake of the human race. He died, that he might raise us up and rise with us to his heaven. Suffering became the school of heavenly wisdom, and death became the passing over to paradise with our Christ who ascended into heaven.

The believer now desires death, not to escape the world, but to be released with the heavenly Christ!

10+ Ascension and the company of the heavenly

By our disobedience we entered into an atmosphere of enmity with the heavenly, those who are faithful in their love to their creator, and we lost our place among them. But as the Word of God became man and ascended into his heaven; he proclaimed reconciliation between God and man. The heavenly now desire not only to serve men, but also desire the day they meet them, that all become one heavenly church.

11+ Ascension and family relationships

As St. Paul talked about family relationships, he said: "I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the Church." (Eph. 5:32) this is he, who the heavenly seen of Christ the Lord never departed from him, who appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). He lifted up his heart and mind to the divine family, considering the believers; "Members of the household of God" (Eph.2:19), and the church, as Christ's bride, without spot (Eph 5:27).

So the Christian family perceive itself as undivided part of the heavenly family, it's laws is not merely a human standard, everyone demand their right, defending their case, blaming other members, but rather desire to carry all with him to heaven! They all sacrifice themselves, even the little child, in the likeness of Christ the Savior of mankind.

12+ New concepts

The Lord Jesus Christ lifted up our depths with him through his ascension, so we begot new concepts that we enjoy through our unity with him, bearing his mind in us, so:

+ **The world**: is a divine beautiful gift for us, we accept it from the hand of the heavenly creator and we praise and glorify him until we pass over to eternity.

+ **The body**: Is holy in the lord, we want it and respect it, and await its glorious resurrection in fellowship with the soul's eternity.

+ **Time**: It is extremely valuable, given to us to fulfill our mission and God's plan that he planned for us until we pass over to what's beyond the time.

+ **Humanity:** We all are brothers, Christ have died for the whole world, opening the door of his heaven to whoever desire to enter. The believer desires the salvation of even those who blaspheme against God, the Church persecutors and those who slander him, that they may all become like soul of Tarsus, a witness to the heavenly Christ and a servant of the heavenly kingdom of God.

+ **Work:** Work is holy, we should be committed to do it with all honesty, not for the people, but for him who ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. For he with the Father and the Holy Spirit works, the Holy Trinity have pleasure in our salvation. We too work either spiritually, mentally or physically with all honesty till the last breath.

Therefore the ascension of our lord the Christ into heaven is a turning point in the life of the human race, whose mind was buried in the temporal, considering eternity as an illusion or an imagination. Now heaven became a reality, in it is the first-born, among those who reposed, heaven welcomes him as its creator and look forward to our entry as members of his body and his holy bride.

+ His ascension granted us the spirit of joy, hope, strength and defiance to all the hosts of darkness.

+His ascension brought back to us our value as God's very much beloved creation.

+His ascension became to us a daily living experience not only during the personal or communal worships but with every breath of our life.

May his ascension work in our life as well as the life of all mankind.

Resources :

- 1- Homilies on Jeremiah, Hom. L11
- 2- Sermon on the N.T 6-9
- 3- Baptismal Instructions, 7:24,25
- 4- In Lev. Hom. 2:5
- 5- In 1Tim.Hom. 10
- 6- In 1 Tim.Hom .11
- 7- Sermon 362:8
- 8-
- 9-

