

Preston, Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025

## Ascension of Our Lord

*“Captivam duxit captivitatem.”<sup>1</sup>*

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

*“Thou hast led captivity captive.”*

Since Jesus died on the Cross and visited hells, where our fathers in faith were expecting Him for centuries since the Fall, the saints of the Old Testament were waiting in a peaceful joy the day heaven would become accessible again. It is done now: Jesus, after spending 40 more days with his disciples opened for them the doors of paradise. They were no longer locked, since His death upon the Cross, but no one else than the Redeemer going to Heaven would be able to open them for all. Those who were captive in the hells, became another kind of captive, but from their own will, and with a great joy that could not be taken of them. From Hope that one day the Messiah would come and free them from their captivity outside of Heaven, they became filled with Divine Charity, as they saw the Lord face to face for an entire day, between the moment of his death, and the hour of His Resurrection.

Today is the final triumph of Jesus over evil, and the first accomplishment of his promise of eternal life. Today we are celebrating the triumphal entry of Jesus in the heavenly Jerusalem, but not alone: being King, it is highly convenient that those he saved would come with Him. The angels were waiting in heaven; Jesus had the company of the multitudes of the Patriarchs, Judges, Prophets, Holy Women and all the saints of the first alliance, to enter the eternal Kingdom. From the valley where our fathers were waiting in a strange captivity, they were rewarded for their patience and quiet expectation of the Saviour. They were caught into a captivity all of us should be jealous and desirous to enter in: the one of Charity.

Through our fathers, who didn't lack of faith, we may become participant of their joy. Like them we were captive, enchained enslaved with the unpleasant bonds of our sins. Since their glorification following Jesus' enter in His Kingdom, it has been an uninterrupted continuation of Jesus' glorification, with all the saints entering the joy of the Master. Today is the beginning of the feast of all saints, which will never end. It began with the Only-begotten Son of God, and following Him, all the adoptive sons of God came in, being aggregated to God's family in the mystery of the Redemption.

*“When Christ ascended into heaven, says St. Paul, a whole train of holy souls, a glorious conquest, entered therein with Him: Captivam duxit captivitatem. But these souls of the just who escorted Jesus in His triumph are only the first fruits of innumerable harvests. Unceasingly souls are ascending*

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 67, 19.

into heaven, until that day when the kingdom of Jesus shall have attained the measure of its fulness<sup>2</sup>.”

Whoever would be baptised and be faithful to God’s commandment is called to take part in the eternal heritage. These are the last words Jesus gave to his disciples before his Ascension. One last command to fulfil, with the promise of an eternal reward at the end. St Leo the Great goes even further and leads our contemplation towards the magnificence of God’s promise:

“On this holy day, we have received not only the assurance of entering into possession of eternal glory, but we have already entered into the heights of heaven with Christ Jesus<sup>3</sup>.”

Let’s therefore choose to become captive of God’s love, the only holy slavery that would make us truly and only free. Our path to Heaven is today illuminated in a wonderful way, as Jesus Himself maintains the doors of paradise opened, for us to contemplate a glimpse of his Glory, under the veil of Faith and Hope.

“The hour of this glorification has not yet struck for us. But while awaiting our eternal union with the choir of the blessed, we should in mind and holy desires dwell in that heaven where Christ, our Head, lives and reigns for ever<sup>4</sup>.”

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> Dom Marmion, *Christ in his mysteries*, Chp. 16, “... and now Father, glorify thy Son”, III.

<sup>3</sup> St Leo the Great, *Sermo 1 de Ascensione Domini*, c. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Dom Marmion, *Op. cit.*