

THE ASCENSION (ABC)

A man by the name of Arnold Toynbee worked for many years on his monumental history of the world. Near the end of this epic work, he wrote one highly significant paragraph. 'When I began this work, I found myself looking at a great parade of marchers through history. But as the work progressed, the marchers all fell, one by one, by the wayside. And now, only one marcher remains, growing larger and larger with each step.' That marcher is Jesus Christ. His ascension means that no one will ever usurp his place as Lord of all creation and history.

'Lord' is one of the titles which Jesus earned for Himself after His Ascension. Today's second reading, says that God has made Jesus Lord of all Creation after he ascended into Heaven. The early Christians called Jesus Lord in place of Caesar – quite a risky thing to do. When one Roman met another on the road he would greet him by saying: 'Caesar is Lord' and the other would respond: 'and the Lord is Caesar'. But the early Christians vowed to disagree. They would say: 'Jesus is Lord' and the other would respond: 'and the Lord is Jesus'. They laid their lives on the line by calling Jesus Lord – no fair-weather friends there.

I remember there was a programme on television way back in the 70th's called 'the way' and the participants were talking about the possible discovery of fifth gospel. I'm told it is still an open question among scripture scholars today.

That being said, I think that each of us has a tendency to write his or her own fifth gospel where the difficult things Jesus asks of us are passed over and the easy things are underscored. So having Jesus as my Lord does not mean that I will be spared the Cross or take short cuts to His Kingdom. Have you ever noticed when small children are given bread and jam, they usually lick off the jam and then discard the bread, the less tasty bit. We're sometimes like that with Our Lord.

Acknowledging Jesus as my lord and living as he taught can sometimes make us seem out of step with the rest of society but the person who remains faithful to the end will be saved.

After Jesus had ascended, the apostles were gazing into the sky. Let our gaze be always fixed on Him wherever our life taken us. Only in this way can we be sure of sharing in His ascended glory.

THE ASCENSION (extra thoughts)

Its forty days since we celebrated Easter – the Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord. These last forty days do not seem that much different to the forty days of Lent for many people. However, because of Lent we can better prepared to bring 'resurrection' into the lives of people who long for it. There's the lovely story of the grandfather trying to explain to his grandson what happens when you die. The boy asks, "Does that mean you won't be able to play catch with me anymore?" "Yes it does", said the grandfather. "Does it mean you won't be able to fly a kite with me anymore?" "Yes, son, it does." "Does it mean you won't be able to take me fishing anymore?" "Yes it does." "Well, grandpa, when that time comes who is going to do these things with me, if you're not there?" The wise old grandfather explained, "When that time comes, it will be time for you to do those things for another little boy."

The feast of the Ascension is the official statement that says, "The time has come." It was time for Jesus to physically go back to the Father and it was time that his disciples became the voice, the hands, and the feet of Jesus - to be his physical presence in the world, which we call Church. St Teresa of Avila put it beautifully when she said, "Christ has no body but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks. Yours are the feet with which brings

you to the help of others. Yours are the hands by which you welcome the stranger, console and hug those who mourn. Yours is the shoulder which the distressed cry on. Yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world.