

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD (A)

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'. As a result of this they were harshly dealt with. 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 scholar 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. Having Jesus as my Lord does not mean, however, 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. Not long ago Archbishop Nichols said that we must take on board the 'full sweep' of the faith and not just pick and choose. In addressing teachers of religion, he stressed that it was tempting to teach only the more attractive aspects of the faith and leave out the more difficult or counter-cultural bits.

Acknowledging Jesus as my lord and living as he taught can be an uphill struggle and sometimes make us seem out of step with the rest of society but the person who remains faithful to their lord and firm 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 whatever life affords. Only in this way can we be sure of sharing in His ascended glory.