

# Regarding the Ascension of the Lord

*A sermon of Pope Saint Leo the Great  
(Sermo 1 de Ascensione, 2-4: PL 54, 395-396)*

The days, O most beloved, between the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, did not pass by without bearing fruit; instead, they confirmed great sacraments and revealed great mysteries.

In those days the fear of a cruel death were torn away from us, and the immortality not only of the soul but also of the body was revealed. In those days, through the breath of the Lord, the Apostles received the Holy Ghost, and the blessed Apostle Peter, after having been given the keys to the kingdom of the Heavens, was put in charge of the shepherding of the flock of the Lord.

In those days the Lord joined as a companion the two disciples as they went on their way and, to dispel the fog of their uncertainty, reproached the tardiness of their frightened and intimidated selves. Their illuminated hearts then received the flame of faith; moreover, those who were lukewarm, upon hearing the Lord declare the Scriptures, became fervent. In this same manner their eyes were opened when they sat at table and the Lord broke the bread. Much happier were the eyes of these men being able to contemplate the glorification of human nature in the Lord, than those of our first parents, who would have seen instead the confusion and mire of their own sin.

In the midst of this miracle and others we find the disciples trembling overtaken by fear, in spite of the Lord appearing to them and saying: *peace be with you* (St. Luke, 24:36), in order to distance from their thoughts the doubt that ensnared their hearts (they believed they were seeing a phantom, not a body). The Lord demonstrates the falsehood of such worries by placing before their eyes signs of the crucifixion on His hands and feet, and invites them to touch them and examine them attentively, since, to cure the wounds of those unbelieving hearts, the prints of the nails and the sword were designed so as to enable their belief; not with a doubting faith, but with a scientific certainty: that the same nature that dwelt in the sepulchre was to be seated, together with God the Father, in His throne.

All this was provided by the providence of God during the time between the Resurrection of the Lord and His Ascension, O most beloved; all this was taught and penetrated the eyes and hearts of His own: that they recognize the Lord Jesus Christ as having truly been resurrected, the same One who was born, suffered, and died.

Hence the most blissful Apostles and all the disciples, who had been alarmed by His death on the Cross and vacillated in their faith of the Resurrection, were reaffirmed by the clarity and light of the truth so that, when the Lord rose to the highest heights of the Heavens, instead of experiencing sadness, they were filled with a great joy.

And certainly there was motive for joy of an extraordinary dimension, infallible and real, upon seeing how, in the midst of that saintly multitude, human nature rose over the dignity of all celestial creatures, elevating itself above the choir of angels and to greater heights than the archangels, His exaltation having no limits; then received by His eternal Father, His human nature became associated to the throne of the glory of the One whose nature was united with His Son.

Given that the Ascension of Christ constitutes our own elevation, and the Body has all the hope of one day being together with the Head: for all this, let us rejoice, beloved, with worthy feelings of joy and let us do so with pious thanksgiving. Today we have been given the grace to penetrate into the interior of the Heavens with Christ, reaching the major realities by the grace of Christ that we had lost by the envy of the devil. To those, our first parents, who the enemy cast out from their abode of happiness (paradise), the Son of God, making Himself one of their own, a human, placed also their children - us - at the right hand of the Father, with whom He lives and reigns in union with the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever, Amen.

By: Pope Saint Leo the Great (400-461) - Regarding the Ascension of the Lord



*Holy Trinity and Saints in Glory* by Sebastiano Conca (1680-1764 ); 1730-35

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