

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
18th May 2023 - Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

Readings: 1st: Acts 1:1-11. 2nd: Ephesians 1:17-23. **Gospel:** Matthew 28:16-20.

There is much to celebrate in the liturgy today; to make us lift up our hearts, raise our vision heavenwards and sing for joy.

Jesus Christ is glorified, made the ruler of everything and given all authority in heaven and on earth.

The Ascension reminds us that Jesus had to suffer and die before he was able to present himself to us in a new way.

Only now could Jesus give people new hope and strength in their lives. Only then, having gone through the darkness and the suffering, could Jesus himself give witness to signs of hope and eternal life.

St John speaks of Jesus lifted up: 3 liftings: a lifting on the cross, a lifting from the grave, a lifting up to heaven, to draw all people to himself.

The preface to the Eucharistic prayer says; 'Mediator between God and man, judge of the world and Lord of Hosts, he ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our head and founder, has gone before.

One joy of the Ascension is Jesus can be with us at all times. Whereas you and I can only be in one place at once, which was true for Jesus when he was here in the flesh on earth; now he can be everywhere, and with us until the end of time.

What we celebrate in the Ascension is the Glorious Availability of Christ. The Christ of our faith abides for ever and is accessible for ever as our indestructible point of reference beyond history, the source beyond ourselves in the ambiguities and trials of our everyday life.

Another joy is another great truth of the Ascension: there at the heart of the Godhead is redeemed humanity. 'He has raised our human nature to the throne at God's right hand.'

Another joy is the Christian hope expressed by St Luke in Acts, as Christ coming back to us again.

So much to encourage and be joyful on this feast.

But while we are raised up in hope and hold our heads high, we are not to spend our time gazing into the sky, or as we say 'daydreaming.'

The eye of the Christian disciple scans the human landscape, the feet of the disciple planted firmly on the ground. Not standing still, but stepping forward on the mission of claiming the world for the authority of the risen Lord.