

- There's a curious rubric in this Mass that we just witnessed. After the reading of the Gospel, the Paschal Candle, which is the symbol of the Risen Christ, and which for the past 40 days has been burning steadfastly for Mass, is now extinguished and removed.
- This rubric of the Old Mass, which has not survived in the *Novus Ordo*, symbolizes that our Risen Lord is no longer with us, but that He has ascended to the Father where we can no longer see Him.
- But His going to the Father should not be a cause for sadness, as if Christ has abandoned us. To the contrary, our Lord's Ascension into Heaven is of mighty benefit to us!
- In His Last Supper Discourses, recorded for us in the Gospel of John, our Lord said to His apostles:

*Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.*

- Yes, tonight we mark the departure of our Risen Lord after 40 days of Easter glory. But it is not a sad departure, for Jesus goes to prepare a place for us in Heaven!
- As Catholics we know that, "Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live for ever with Christ. They are like God forever, for they see Him as He is, 'face to face' (CCC 1023).
- In Heaven we will enjoy a perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity - a communion of life and love with the Trinity, with the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the blessed.
- Indeed, "Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfillment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness" (CCC 1024). But on our own, we are powerless to get there.
- Only Christ can open to man the gates of Heaven so that we might have confidence that we too shall go where He has preceded us (cf. CCC 661). By His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, our Lord thrown wide those ethereal gates we so long for.
- But in our Lord's Ascension we turn our minds not only to the Heavenly reward that awaits the Blessed, but we also recall that Christ ascended so that He might send to us the Paraclete, Who guides us to all truth (cf. John 16:13).
- This Paraclete is both the Sanctifier and the Consoler. It is He who makes us Christ's witnesses in the world, and it is He who prepares us for Heaven! So as we celebrate our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, we now await the coming of this Paraclete at Pentecost!
- And it's for this reason that Jesus told His apostles at the Last Supper that, if they love Him, they should rejoice that He's going to the Father!
- Moreover, we know by faith that Jesus has not left us forever, but that He will come again to this world in power and glory.
- Just as Christ descended from Heaven into this world at His Incarnation, Christ will also return to this "Valley of Tears" at the end of time to rescue us.
- As we heard at the end of the Lesson this evening, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." And so now we wait.

- Yet there is still more to ponder in our Lord's Ascension. In ascending to Heaven as He did in human form, Jesus took our human flesh into Heaven.
- Our corruptible flesh – that with the world and the devil is one of the 3 great spiritual enemies of our souls that we must constantly do battle against – has now put on incorruptibility.
- Our flesh, which tempts us and blinds us and can hold us captive and enslaved to the mammon of this world, is restored to that perfection it knew before the Fall. In taking our human flesh to Heaven, Jesus “has led captivity captive.”
- So our flesh is no longer something to be feared for binding us to this earth. No, while our weak human flesh may tempt us here on earth, in Heaven it will be glorified.
- Thus, this beautiful Feast of the Ascension, which is the final piece of our Lord's great Paschal Mystery, calls us to exercise well the 3 Theological Virtues of faith, hope, and charity.
- Faith: that Christ has not abandoned us but is preparing a place for us in Heaven; Hope: that He will come again to take us to Himself, and Charity: that we might love Him as His power and goodness deserve.
- My brothers and sisters, do not let your hearts be troubled. Christ our Lord has gone ahead to prepare for us a dwelling place in Heaven! And one day He will return to take us there Himself.
- May we thus pass our days in this Valley of Tears by living well the virtues of faith, hope, and charity so that we may be well prepared for our Lord when we see Him again.