

## CORONA 24

### ASCENSION OF THE LORD

#### *(The Fair Beauty of the Lord)*

Forty days from the Resurrection, Our Lord Jesus Christ was taken from the disciples and ascended to His Kingdom in Heaven where He is at the right hand of the Father. On this day we proclaim the Glory and Majesty of Jesus—Our Transfigured Lord.

The Resurrection had brought joy to the disciples after the distress and despair of Good Friday: they might have been sad with His new departure: but they were not distressed, but simply perplexed. Jesus had promised that He will not leave them and yet He went from their sight up to Heaven. He told them to await the coming of the Holy Spirit Who would give them all the insight that they needed.

Jesus' Ascension is an essential stage in the process of the Salvation: Nativity, Ministry, Triumph into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Passion and Death, Resurrection. Now after 40 days Jesus ascended to His Father, His Mission triumphantly achieved. The number 40 is significant as ever in the story of our Salvation. 40 is a number considered to be full, complete, perfect. 40 years in the desert after the flight from Egypt: 40 days from Bethlehem to Simeon in the Temple: 40 days in the desert at the start of Jesus' ministry. In these 40 days Jesus was been present with the disciples, comforted, encouraging, teaching: now the work of salvation moves on. Jesus is glimpsed heavenward in His glory to his Kingdom, not a Kingdom of this world but that achieved by His work given by His Father. This is therefore a feast of triumph, glory and worship of our Saviour. As God-made-man He totally completed the work sent by His Father and so went to Heaven as the prize of His obedience.

Meanwhile the apostles were mystified: He rose from the dead: now He has gone again—into the clouds. What were they to do? They had bathed in the glory of their risen Lord, but what next.....? Even at the very point of Jesus' Ascension, Peter asks 'Lord, will You now restore the Kingdom to Israel?' They were still of the mindset that Jesus would restore the glory of the Kingdom of Israel as in the time of David. They had still to learn not to yearn for 'a better yesterday' and to move on the Kingdom of the New Covenant, but they did what Jesus told them: they prayed for the Octave until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, who gave them the insight and need what to do for Jesus.

As we keep this Feast, we also need to pray for the renewal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. At this strange time, we need the Spirit's guidance to renew our lives and to move on from this Easter into the new world which is bursting around us. We too should not be yearning for a better yesterday: we need to move on and proclaim anew the message of Jesus in our midst. Perhaps we too can be like the apostles wishing to return to a past but without its drawbacks. It would have been so obvious! Jesus risen, triumphant, powerful! So easy to march down to Caiaphas and Annas and give them six of the best: then go to Pilate and give him six of the best, and say, 'Now we'll do it MY WAY.' But that is not Jesus' way: the peaceful entry on a donkey is not a symbol of kingdom of force and might, but of love and unity and peace. This is the Kingdom to which He goes in triumph of the Feast of the Ascension. Let us glory in Jesus' glory and then wait in prayer for the renewal of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

