



SAINT LOUIS ABBEY



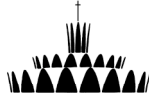
Solemnity of the Ascension May 8, 2005

In the Second Reading of this Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Saint Paul prays that we might know what is the hope that belongs to God's call. On this feast, then, we should pray to know what this hope is, and trust that, through a full participation in this liturgy, we shall be given a deepened understanding of what this hope is.

Each of us has been called by God to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ in his Catholic Church, and by the grace of God we have said 'Yes' to this call. What is it that we may hope for as a result of responding to this call, what is it that God promises to all those who follow the way of Jesus in his Church? Following Saint Paul's text, we see that it must be something very great indeed, so great that we cannot comprehend it with our natural human intellect; we can know it only through the Holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation dwelling within us. What we know by this Spirit we cannot adequately express or even grasp in this life, but let us try to find some concepts and some words, following Saint Paul.

First, the great Apostle tells us that what we are waiting for, what our hope is for, is for an *inheritance* from God, what God our Father bequeaths to us his children. This inheritance we will receive "among the holy ones", that is, among the saints and angels in heaven. Then he tells us that it is an inheritance of incomprehensible, unspeakable riches.

How can we go further in understanding? Saint Paul tells us that our receiving this inheritance will be the result of God's exercise of the surpassing greatness of his power. We are so weak, so poor, we have been so subjected to sin and death, and the inheritance is so great, that it will take the exercise of nothing less than God's omnipotent power for us to receive this inheritance. What will this exercise of God's omnipotent power be like "for those who believe" -- that, notice, is the condition of having this power exercised for us, of receiving the inheritance: it is that we *believe*, that is, that when all is said and done about our life, we have, by the grace of God, had *faith working through love* -- what will this exercise of God's omnipotent power be like for those who believe? It will be fully in accord with, like, the Apostle tells us, God's exercise of his omnipotent power by which he raised Jesus Christ from the dead and then -- what we celebrate today -- "seated him at his right hand in heaven, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come." That is, what this feast of the Ascension promises us is that, if we believe, then God, by an act of omnipotent power, just as he did for Jesus, will raise us from the dead, and glorify us, body and soul, and bring us to heaven, where we, by participation, will sit with Jesus at God the Father's right hand, and will be, by participation, with Jesus above every



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principality, authority, power and dominion -- that is, above every angelic power -- and above every name that is named -- that is, above everything whatsoever in creation -- not only in this age but in the one to come -- not only in the present state of creation, but in its final state when it will be the new heaven and the new earth.

Already we are using words whose full import in this life we cannot even begin to understand, already we are catching a glimpse, as in a glass darkly, of what our inheritance is to be, what are the riches of its glory. Yet this is not all, this is not yet the essence of the inheritance, which infinitely surpasses all else that is part of it. Saint Paul goes on to speak, in such way as can be done in this life, of the supreme and final result of the exercise of God's omnipotent power for Jesus. What God did after raising Jesus from the dead, and seating him at his right hand in heaven, and putting him over everything that is, now and in the age to come, is to *give* him -- *give* him -- to us, to us *the church*, as *head* over all things, and to make us, the church *his body* -- and now those extraordinary words, "his body, *the fullness of him who fills all things in every way.*" God makes us the body of Jesus, who is himself God, and, having glorified us in body and soul in the age to come, will make us to be utterly filled with Jesus, with God, in every way. *We, while remaining fully human, having attained the complete glory of what it is to be human, become one with God.*

Now all words cease, all praise becomes silence, after a brief flash understanding must cease. But by living faith, through Word and Sacrament, in darkness we hold on to the Mystery which these words signify, and await the day when that Mystery will be revealed in us, and we in that Mystery, and light, joy, and glory break forth for ever.