

He ascended into heaven; sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. Our Saviour had told His disciples that after His resurrection He would return to His Father; that is to say, He would ascend into heaven, to enjoy that glory which He had shared in the bosom of His Father before the world was created. Had there been nothing to detain Him on earth, He would have returned there immediately after His resurrection, and from the tomb He would have ascended into heaven; but grave reasons demanded a delay.

He must tarry yet a little while here below, (i) to attest beyond question the truth of His resurrection, and (2) to perfect the instruction of His Apostles in reference to the administration of the Sacraments, the organization and government of the Church.

This is why the ascension did not take place until forty days after the resurrection. During these forty days the life of our Saviour was that of those in heaven rather than of those on earth. He was the very same man He was before His death, but His state was no longer the same; it was the state of the blessed in heaven.

Moreover, instead of dwelling constantly among men, as He had previously done, He hides Himself in God, and only at intervals does He manifest Himself, making divine visits to His disciples, in which He speaks to them of the Holy Ghost and of the kingdom of God. And as the kingdom of God that is to say, the Church is founded on faith, He makes use of every means to confirm their faith: He partakes of their food, He exhibits to them His wounds, He invites the most incredulous to touch Him. Come, says He to St. Thomas, and put in thy finger here, and see my hands, and bring here thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless but believing.

Let us here observe, my brethren, that our Saviour risen from the dead retains in His glorified body the wounds of His passion; this He does to teach us that, would we have a part in His glory, we must share in His sufferings.

On the fortieth day our Saviour ascended into heaven in the presence of His disciples; thus teaching us the happy end to which a Christian life leads. The forty days which preceded His ascension are the model of the life which His disciples should live. The life of a true Christian should be a heavenly life, hidden in God; not a worldly life, wholly engrossed in the things of this world. This heavenly life is that Christian life which is ended by ascension into heaven.