

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Fifth Sunday of Eastertide Year A, 10 May 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

HEAVEN IS OUR ETERNAL HOME

John the Evangelist situates today's gospel reading within the context of a farewell speech of Jesus to his disciples. Jesus was about to be taken away from them and so, they were troubled by his farewell speech. Many people who were privileged to have some parting words with their parents or loved ones just before their death will understand how troubled the disciples felt. Some can easily remember when their parents or loved ones were about to leave this world. All that filled their heart was the pain of loss and the reality of not seeing them again.

On the other hand, our Christian faith reassures us that death will not have the last say on any of us (cf. Jn 11:4). Indeed, for us who believe, life is changed not ended (*Catholic Missal*, Preface I for the Dead). By our faith, we believe that we shall be reunited with our loved ones again in heaven. To you who still feel the pain of loss of your loved ones, Christ tells you today, do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe that your loved ones who have gone before you in the hope of the resurrection are at peace with God.

There are many rooms in heaven: With these words, Jesus reassures his disciples that there is enough space for everyone in heaven. Jesus teaches that we need to support one another in this journey of faith so that we all will meet in heaven. However, this support could be rendered in different ways. In the First Reading (Acts 6:1-7), the Christian Community applied what could be referred to as the division of labour in their preaching ministry. The disciples were to continue with prayer and preaching while the deacons were to serve through works of charity.

In the Church, there are different ministries through which we serve God on our way to heaven. We have both ordained and unordained ministries in the Church. Through these ministries, we prepare rooms in heaven, not just for ourselves but also for those whom we serve.

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life: As the Way, Jesus opens the path to heaven for us. As the Truth, he keeps his promises to prepare rooms for us in heaven. As the Life, he brings us to the joys of eternal life.

Our satisfaction (heaven) is in seeing the Father: In heaven, we shall behold what St Thomas Aquinas called 'the beatific vision'. The Church teaches us that heaven is a state of perfect life with the Most Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, the angels and all the saints. It is the ultimate end and fulfilment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness (*Catechism of the Cath. Church*, 1024).

In heaven, there will no longer be any form of sorrow or pain. We shall never be separated from one another again. Just like Christ, death will no longer have power over us (cf. Romans 6:9). For the moment, we can only imagine what heaven feels like. For no eye has seen, no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9). Now, we are God's children and what we shall be has not yet been revealed. Yet when he appears in his glory, we know that we shall be like him for then we shall see him as he really is (1 Jn 3:2).

Heaven begins here on earth: However, this heaven which is the state of partaking in the life of God himself begins here on earth. It is heaven when we hear the life-giving word of God. It is heaven when we offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ the High Priest (cf. Heb 4:14). It is heaven when we eat the Body of Jesus and drink his Precious Blood. His Body and Blood give us eternal life (cf. Jn 6:54)

It is heaven when we feel the assurance that we are God's own people, a chosen race, a royal people, a holy nation who have been called out of darkness into God's wonderful light (1 Pt 2:9).

May the powerful word of God and the life-giving sacraments lead us to our eternal home in heaven. Amen.