

## Some thoughts on Ascension Day

**Luke 24.50-53 - Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.**

I can well remember school assemblies which always seemed to fall on Ascension Day, and discussing what it meant for Christ to ascend into heaven. We'd start by encouraging a 'volunteer' to ascend a set of kitchen steps, and then to descend (I'd probably need to prepare a risk assessment nowadays!) - and so we'd work out that ascend meant 'going up', and descending meant 'coming down'.

We'd then discuss whether 'going up' always meant a physical elevation. If the local football team **went up** to the next division (a belief in miracles came in handy here!) - did it mean that their pitch would somehow be above ground level? How could they **go up** to the next class at the end of the year as the school was all on one level with no steps?

And so we decided that 'going up' or ascending meant moving to a better place - perhaps moving on to the next stage in life which would allow more freedom to move on once more at a later stage when new possibilities arose.

**How could Christ ascend to a higher level and yet still be with us and within us?**

And so we concluded that Christ's ascension was not to some lofty throne where he was far off 'up there' but was to a place where he was better placed to be more closely with each of us. No longer tied to a small country in the middle east, where he could be with just a few people - now he was in a place where he could be with everyone, all the time.

Of course the artists have always struggled to portray 'The Ascension', and they tend to illustrate an upward flight, which is contrary to what the children and I had concluded, and they were particularly amused by the well known (and dare I say mocked) painting by **Hans Suss von Kulmbach**



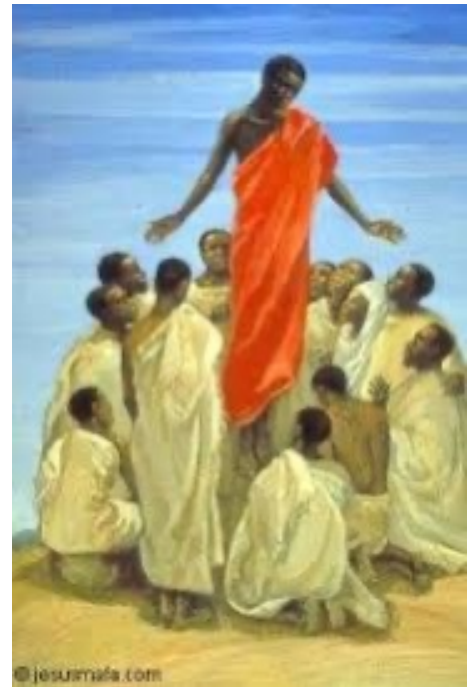


More usually a grand exit is shown, like this one from **Garafalo (Left),**

or of this black Jesus - I don't know the artist. (right)

But let us move away from school assembly and the work of artists of old, because Ascension Day for us is the time when Emmanuel 'Christ with us' went to a place where he could be alongside you and

me 'until the end of the age'. He can now sit with us, walk with us, laugh with us and cry with us.



The Camino to Santiago may be closed, but the Camino of life continues, and has taken us to a difficult place - the weather is bright but we are filled with concerns; the metaphorical blisters hurt, and the journey seems to be up a never-ending uphill trudge, and for some of us we travel in lonely isolation - but alongside us and deep within us the Lord Jesus Christ is our companion and our consolation. Even when we don't recognise him (Emmaus Road) he is there, and when we feel like giving up, he carries us (remember 'Footprints?').

The eternal gates lift up their heads,  
The doors are opened wide,  
The King of glory is gone up  
Unto his Father's side.

And ever on our earthly path  
A gleam of glory lies,  
A light still breaks behind the cloud  
That veils thee from our eyes.

Lift up our hearts, lift up our minds,  
And let thy grace be given,  
That, while we live on earth below,  
Our treasure be in heaven;

**That, where thou art at God's right hand,  
Our hope, our love may be:  
Dwell in us now, that we may dwell  
For evermore in thee.**

## **Walk On, O People of God**

### **Refrain:**

*Walk on, O People of God;  
walk on, O people of God!  
A new law, God's new alliance,  
all creation is reborn.  
Walk on, O people of God;  
walk on, O people of God!*

*Look on Calvary's summit;  
on the rock there towers a cross;  
death that gives birth to new living,  
a new people, a new light.  
Christ has brought us salvation  
with his death and rising again.  
Everything comes to new birthing,  
all creation is reborn.*

### **Refrain**

*Christ takes into his body  
all our sin, enslavement and pain;  
as he destroys them he brings us  
life's abundance, life's new joy.  
Christ brings reconciliation  
to all things and people with God.  
Nature bursts into new flowering,  
all creation is reborn.*

### **Refrain**

*Heaven and earth are embracing,  
and our souls find pardon at last.  
Now heaven's gates are reopened  
to the sinner, to us all.  
Israel walks a journey;  
now we live, salvation's our song;  
Christ's resurrection has freed us.  
There are new worlds to explore.*

### **Refrain**

## **Camina, Pueblo De Dios**

### **Refrain:**

*Camina, pueblo de Dios,  
camina, pueblo de Dios.  
Nueva ley, nueva alianza,  
en la nueva creacion.  
Camina, pueblo de Dios,  
camina, pueblo de Dios.*

*Mira\_ally\_en el Calvario  
en la roca hay una cruz;  
muerte que\_engendra la vida,  
nuevos hombres, nueva luz.  
Cristo nos ha salvado  
con su muerte\_y resurreccion.  
Todas las cosas renacen  
en la nueva creacion.*

### **Refrain**

*Cristo toma\_en su cuerpo  
el pecado, la\_esclavitud.  
Al destruirlos,  
nos trae una nueva plenitud.  
Pone\_en paz a los hombres,  
a las cosas y\_al Creador.  
Todo renace\_a la vida  
en la nueva creacion.*

### **Refrain**

*Cielo\_y tierra se\_abrazan,  
nuestra alma halla\_el perdon.  
Vuelven a\_abrirse  
los cielos para\_el hombre pecador.  
Israel peregrino, vive\_  
y canta tu redencion.  
Hay nuevos mundos abiertos*

## **A Time of prayer**

### **Collect for Ascension Day**

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens, so we in heart and mind may also ascend and with him continually dwell; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

At this time of continued uncertainty, we pray for so much, but in particular for our Camino Chaplains as they offer their thoughts and deliberations here over the weeks to come. We pray for Sybille and all those in Spain as the Covid 19 restrictions are modified and for the church in Spain, and those whose livelihood depends on the Camino. We pray for those who are working to look after all those who cannot look after them selves and who feel that they are alone.

**Please allow us to pray for - You**, your family, your congregation, your exploration of new ways of ministry in difficult times - the things on your heart this day. May the Christ who defies the rules of social distancing walk closely with you, now and always.

God has called us to journey for a season through the wilderness places;  
**And so, as Jesus did before us, we will set out once more to wander in an uncomfortable landscape and wrestle with its challenges, that through the tempering action of the Spirit, we may emerge ready to do the work of the Kingdom.**

### **Blessing**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life and the blessing of Almighty God Father Son and Holy Spirit Be with you as you continue your Camino- and for all time

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