

To enter into Jesus is to enter into Heaven!

Where's Heaven? Which way do you go to get to Heaven?

When we ask our kids, "*Where's Heaven?*"

They commonly say **up there** ... and they point up to **the sky**.

How do they know that? **How** do we know that?

Well, **numerous references** in Scripture give us the impression that **Heaven is up**, such as our **First Reading** from the **Acts** of the Apostles where

the angels, seen as two men dressed in white, ask the Apostles,

"Why are you standing there looking at the sky?"

This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into Heaven."

And, in our **Second Reading** from Ephesians, **St. Paul** tells how **God** raised Jesus from the dead and He is now seated at His Right Hand far above every principality.

And, in our **Gospel**, **St. Luke** tells us, how **Jesus** "*raised his hands and blessed (His Apostles), and as he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven."*

And, in our **Creed** that we will pray together in a few minutes, **we say**

"For us men and for our salvation, He came down from Heaven." **Then we say**,

"He ascended into Heaven and is seated at the Right Hand of the Father."

So we have **this image** of **Heaven** being somewhere up in the sky.

We're here on earth ... and **Heaven** is somewhere else ... up there in the sky.

Which might make us think that **since Jesus went up to Heaven, He is away from us**.

Well, I'd like to share another idea with you on **where** Heaven is.

It's **an insight** that comes from **Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI**, who wrote,

"We go to Heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into him."

And **so** he concludes, "*Jesus Himself is what we call heaven."*

Have you ever thought about that before? **What** a beautiful insight to contemplate.

That means that Heaven isn't just somewhere up in the sky.

But rather, Heaven is wherever Jesus is!

And **where** is Jesus? **As God**, He can be anywhere He wants ...

and **He** wants to be with us ... **which means** ... **He's here on earth too!**

Where is He? **His power is in all seven of the Sacraments.**

And in one of them ... **the Eucharist** ... He is truly present to us ... sacramentally!

It's **because of this** that we can accurately say that **the Eucharist** is a foretaste of Heaven ... because it is a foretaste of Jesus.

We can't see Him with **our eyes** ... but we believe His words ... that **He is truly there**,
veiled under the appearance of **bread and wine**.

Which means that **the Eucharist** is really ... *Heaven on earth!*

We all say that we want to go to Heaven.

Well, we actually do go to Heaven ... **each time we receive Holy Communion** ...
or **more precisely** ... **Heaven comes to us!**

That is why I often describe the Mass as the place where Heaven meets Earth!

Do you think of that when you return to your pew after receiving Holy Communion!

Do you realize how special it is to receive Jesus in the Eucharist?

What are you saying to Jesus?

We asked this of our kids on our recent **Youth Retreat** and **no one raised their hand!**

You have **a few minutes** to pour out your heart to the Lord ... **truly there with you**
... are you taking advantage of that?

Kneeling down after receiving Holy Communion is **not the time** to be thinking
about anything else ... **but Him**. Please don't be looking around and watching others
receive Communion and watching me purify the vessels. Close your eyes and tell
Jesus how much you love Him ... thank Him for blessings and ask Him for needs.

Throughout the Scriptures, **God** has revealed how near He is to us.

Just two Sundays ago, we heard proclaimed from the Book of Revelation,

*"Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race ...
God himself will always be with them as their God."*

Understanding God's desire to be with us always, should wipe away any thought
that **the Ascension of Jesus to the Father in Heaven** marked the beginning of

"a temporary absence of Christ from the world."

Jesus is definitely not absent from the world.

Yes, He is **in Heaven** at the right hand of the Father,
but He is also here with us on earth.

He dwells in the soul of each and every baptized person,
which is why **St Paul** was able to say, "*At baptism we become clothed in Christ*."

Plus ... as Jesus showed us at the Last Supper ...

He is truly present on **our Altars** at every Mass.

and truly present in the Tabernacle of every Catholic Church.

This is **a great mystery** for sure **but God wants us to realize**

that **Jesus did not leave the Father** when he came down to earth ...

and **Jesus did not leave us** when He ascended into Heaven.

So, **Jesus isn't just in Heaven** ... Jesus is **here with us too**.

God is with His people, just as He promised!

Now since we believe that Jesus was fully human and fully divine,

then **in His Ascension**, Jesus took our humanity and brought it into

the inner life of God in a **brand new way!**

Now **God wasn't just with His people** ... but **His people were now with God!**

So rather than Jesus' Ascension being viewed as a time of **temporary separation,**

the Ascension signifies that we now have a **new intimacy with God.**

Jesus took our humanity and brought it into the Trinity!

The Ascension reveals that man has found an everlasting place ... in God!

This is reason for great joy ... like that expressed in our Responsorial Psalm where we sang, "*All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness.*"

Luke notes this same joy among **the Apostles** even after Jesus was taken up from them into Heaven. He writes, "*(the Apostles) returned to Jerusalem with great joy.*"

The **only way they could have been filled with great joy** is **because they understood** that even though Jesus ascended to the Father ... **He never left them** ... and **He would be with them always** ... **as he marked out the way for them to follow** ... **to one day be with the Father in Heaven.**

So, the **Gates of Heaven open** ... and **how do we enter?**

Remember the words of **Pope Emeritus Benedict**,

"we go to heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into Him."

Many people want to go to Heaven, and **many people try to find Heaven in this world.** **But Heaven is not in the world ... Heaven is being with God.**

Notice the **Risen Jesus didn't spend much time here on Earth** after rising from the dead, He remained here **only 40 days**. **Then He left to go home to the Father.**

By leaving the Earth and ascending to be with the Father, **Jesus clearly showed us where our focus in life should be ...**
not on the things of this earth ... but on the things of Heaven.

Jesus wants each one of us to be with Him, which means to be in Heaven.

How many times, Jesus says in the Gospels, “*Come, follow Me!*”

That certainly implies that He’s leading us somewhere!

Where is Jesus leading us? To the Father ... in the Kingdom of Heaven!

Do you really want to go to Heaven? Then you need to go to Jesus!

What’s the direction of Heaven?

Is it really up in the sky?

Well, it’s really wherever Jesus is!

St. Catherine of Sienna used to say,

“Heaven is here for all those on their way to Heaven!”

As we celebrate the Feast of Our Lord’s Ascension into Heaven,

let’s realize that He never really left us.

As our **Savior and Lord**, Jesus now reigns in Heaven at the right hand of the Father.

As our **Brother and Friend**, Jesus is still here on Earth

to nourish us with Himself and heal us with His mercy

so that we enter ever more deeply into Him **until**

we finally reside with **Him and the Father in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Where’s Heaven?

Remember,

“We go to heaven to the degree that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into Him.”