

One of the most familiar sayings of Jesus that is linked to today's feast of the Ascension is Our Lord's assurance that "There are many rooms in my Father's House, and I am going to prepare a place for you, so that where I am you may be too."

The feast we celebrate today marks the beginning of that step, and is the anchor of our hope that one day we shall share with Christ the glory the second reading speaks about.

It's worth noting, however, that for all the glory that is attributed to Christ, his character has not changed from what it was on earth: "I go to prepare a place for you." Even in heaven his will is still to serve us, to do what is good for us. It brings out that the basic characteristic of love is service, a fact we remember particularly today in our remembrance of Mothers' Day.

It's a characteristic we also expect to find in the Saints, for each time we pray to them for this or that favour, we take it for granted that they will use their proximity to God to obtain for us the favour we ask for. The "Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord", which is said at a funeral refers more to the fact that we will no longer be tried by temptation or tested by suffering and hardship, than to rest from the work of doing good.

Which gives all the more point to the saying: "As a man lives so will he die." If we expect to get to heaven we have a pretty good indicator now in our responsiveness to the needs of others. If we often affect a deaf ear when it is in our power to help; if frequently we can't be bothered or don't want to get involved, then the indications are that our chance of salvation are pretty slim, no matter how regular we are at the external observances of our faith.

So, while today we look forward in hope to the moment when we shall join Christ in his ascent to heaven, we must make sure that this hope is not just wishful thinking, but is the result of the conviction that we are doing our best to live up to the standard Christ has set us.