

was one of encouragement and consolation. He promised to continue to act as their Father and Protector in heaven (while Florentius took his place on earth) and foretold, too, the continuance and stability of their Congregation. But to ensure this he advised such as were willing to join themselves to one of the regular Orders approved by the Church. In their fervour they were ready to adopt at his word the strict enclosure of the Carthusians or the austerity of the Cistercians, well knowing Gerard's affection for the members of these two Orders. But his choice for them had already been made: the Rule of St Augustine, which did not differ much from that under which they had been living so long, and it was the Rule of charity and simplicity, the two virtues ever dearest to his heart.

'So, as the day of St Bernard was drawing to its close, Gerard saw his glorious patrons Augustine and Bernard enter in at the door and await the passing forth of his soul from his body . . . and just after the fifth hour of that day he delivered up to God his happy soul, a soul meet to be crowned for ever in the glory of charity with the saints and elect of God.' It was August 20th, 1384.

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## THE ASCENSION

BY

ST AUGUSTINE<sup>1</sup>

*Translated by E. J. B. Fry*

1. The Resurrection and Ascension fill up the full measure of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate his resurrection on Easter Sunday; the Ascension we celebrate today. For us both days are sacred. He rose again to put before us a proof of resurrection; he ascended to give us protection from on high. And Jesus Christ is our Lord and Saviour, first as he hung on the cross, then seated in heaven. He paid our purchase-money when he hung on the cross; he gathers what he bought when he sitteth in heaven. For when he has gathered all whom, throughout time, he does gather, then, at the end of time, will he come. *God shall come manifestly* (Ps. 49, 3), as it is written, not hiddenly as he first came, but openly. For it was right for him to come hiddenly when he was to be judged, but he will come openly to judge. For if the Lord had first come openly, who would have dared to judge him when he was openly known? The apostle Paul indeed says: *If they had known, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory* (I Cor. 2, 8). But if he had not been put

<sup>1</sup> *Tractatus Inediti*. Ed. Dom Germain Morin, xxi.

to death, death would not have died: the devil was conquered by his own victory. When first he flung man down into death by his seduction, the devil was exultant. By deceit he killed the first man; by killing the new Man he lost the first from his snare.

2. Therefore the true victory of our Lord Jesus Christ was gained when he rose and ascended into heaven; and what you heard when the Apocalypse was read was then fulfilled: *the Lion of the tribe of Judah* has prevailed (Apoc. 5, 5). He is called the Lion and he is also called the Lamb: lion for fortitude, lamb for innocence; lion because he is unconquerable, lamb because he is meek. And when that Lion has been put to death, by his very death he conquers the other lion that seeketh whom he may devour. For the devil is called a lion for savagery, not for strength. And so the apostle Peter says: It behoves us to watch against temptations because *your adversary the devil goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5, 8). But he also told *how* he goes about: *He goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour* (Ibid.). We should all have run into the jaws of this lion unless the Lion of the tribe of Judah had prevailed. Against a lion, the Lion; against a wolf, the Lamb. The devil was exultant when Christ died, and in that very death of Christ the devil was conquered. It was as though he went into a mousetrap to take food. He was the emperor of death and rejoiced in this death, and what he rejoiced at became a snare for himself. The Lord's cross was like a mousetrap for the devil. The Lord's death was the bait by which he was ensnared. For see, our Lord Jesus Christ rose again. What now has become of death which hung upon the tree? What of the insults of the Jews? Where is the arrogance and pride of those who wagged their heads before the cross, saying: *If he be the Son of God let him come down from the cross?* (Matt. 27, 40, 42). See, he did more than they required in that mockery, for it is a greater thing to rise again from the tomb than to come down from the tree.

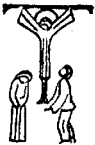
3. And now great indeed is the glory of his ascension into heaven, his sitting at the right hand of the Father. But this we do not see with our eyes, for neither did we see him hanging on the tree, nor look upon him rising again from the tomb. We hold all this by faith. We perceive with the heart's eyes. We are praised because we did not see and have believed. For the Jews also saw Christ. It is no great thing to see Christ with the bodily eyes, but it is indeed a great thing to believe in Christ with the heart's eyes. Indeed if Christ were present and stood before us and held his peace, how should we know who he was? And then if he were silent how should we benefit? Is it not better that he should be absent but speak to us in the Gospel, than present but silent? And yet he is not absent if you hold him in

your heart. Believe in him and you see him. He is not before your eyes and yet he possesses your heart. For if he were not with us what we have heard would be a lie: *Behold I am with you even unto the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28, 20).

## THE MEDIEVAL GUEST

BY

TUDOR EDWARDS



HE exhortations and counsel of St Benedict in his Rule on the reception of guests are too well known to be repeated here. Their importance however can never be sufficiently stressed and their wisdom and beauty can never be sufficiently praised. There is in the Luxembourg Museum of Paris a painting by Dauban of a stranger being received by a convent. It is a perfect interpretation of the 53rd chapter of the Rule, with a poignant beauty and a moral for all humanity.

Doubtless there were guests even among the primitive communities in the deserts of Nitria and the Thebaid, although such a speculation is beyond the scope of the present essay. During the earlier history of the monasteries, the 11th and 12th centuries for example, hospitality was a *sine qua non* of monastic life. In some cases, indeed, as of the abbeys of Reading and Battle, the foundation-charters indicated that the providing of such hospitality in the district was the motive of the founder.

The relationship between Church and State, between Church and Society, was then very different from what it is today. The Church was closely interwoven with the entire national fabric. The monastery was church, school, inn, sometimes bank, and often judicial court. It was the forerunner of the large guest-house type of inn that we know today. Such lodging-houses and ale-houses as existed were inadequate and could not compete with the comfort of monastic guest-houses. Thus it was that nobles with their retinues, ministers and prelates, aristocracy and peasants, planned their journeys, as near as possible, to touch points at which religious houses were situated, for the monks provided good beds, clean linen, good liquor, meat and bread, and often entertainment.

The normal stay of visitors was two days and two nights, but the privilege was often abused, particularly by the influential. Hospitality became, economically, such a heavy burden on many houses that Edward I forbade anyone to eat or lodge in a religious house unless such a person was the founder or had been invited by the