

20.5.68

"This day, was made by the Lord: we rejoice & are glad. Alleluia"

These three days immediately preceding Ascension Day are called, in the Church calendar, Rogation Days - days of special prayer of asking God for what we need. Their origin is quite far back in the history of the liturgy of the Western Church, at a time when the world was far less urbanised than it is now, and people even in towns were much more aware of their dependence on nature, crops, the seasons of the year. The Rogation days were festivals, with processions and blessings and prayers for the success and fruitfulness of all the work done in spring & early summer - that the growing harvests would ripen and give abundance, favoured with sun and rain in their due proportions. Today, in Hong Kong such anxieties are not of immediate concern to most of us - but our needs are still real, even for the foodstuffs (tinned or not) on which livelihood depends. One obvious need here is for sufficient rainfall to fill our reservoirs and guarantee an essential water supply for this vast city. And each of us has his and her own personal needs, for which also we should use these 3 days of special rogation prayer. So let's adapt this old customary time and use it for our own urbanised needs, by making some special effort to praise God in these easter days coming up to Ascensiontime, and to ask with faith, trust and confidence with Christ Our Lord for what we need, individually and as a community. Don't worry if you can't seem to decide what it is exactly that we do need - Our Father knows, and His spirit will pray in us. So,

let this be <sup>our</sup> thought as we recite now our prayers at midday.

Notch a Cappella  
R 25

PRAYERS - And for a prayer in music, 'O Jesus X't, have mercy on me. Lord my hope, I cry to you', attributed to Jachet van Borden

Yesterday's gospel reading brought us Christ's instruction, command almost, that we should ask our Father, in His name, for whatever we want and that he would grant it, to bring us joy in full measure. He would ask the Father for us, who would grant our requests because he loves us in His Son, we who have become His friends and have learned to believe that He came from God and goes back to His Father. The great difficulty most people have about praying to God for something is that they don't often see the results, or see what God has to do with any results that may seem to come. We can be so foolish about this; like a little boy who has broken a precious vase and prays for a miracle to repair it before his father and mother find out. Of course there's nothing wrong with praying for a miracle - Christ told us to pray for anything. When we pray for rain, we don't expect the meteorological office to be sending out breathless bulletins on how all the bases of this science or art (whatever it is) have suddenly started going topsy-turvy. The little boy is really trying to save his own skin; like a student who prays, as a last resort, when he knows perfectly well he hasn't worked hard enough for the exam. A person who would come to the conclusion, on these cases, that prayer is

useless has missed the whole point of our relationship with God, and would seem to be unaware of just how God acts in His world and what Christ's life and message is about. It's not accidental that St. John in that gospel passage about asking our Father, is writing in the context of the necessity for us of Christ's death, - resurrection, His return to His Father - now. Too often what we're thinking about when we pray for something is that thing we're praying for - NOT our Father, nor His love for us nor our need in life to become more & more closely united in love with Christ as all this means, for example, in our relations with other people. We can't know the Father to whom we propose to talk without first having listened to Him, known something of what He's like - in other words, hearing His voice and seeing how He acts, through scripture, in the life and work of Christ, in the life and history of the people he forms for himself in His Church. It's our complete trust and self-giving to Him whom we've come to know as a Father, that He's interested in - and that's the way we must pray too. Praying with the mind of Christ, and with Christ, NOT on our own merits, is how we must ask - asking His way, we'll become more like him in love, more closely devoted to our Father and all his wishes for the world's salvation - and a miracle in response to our needs would be too surprising, or too much to ask.