

Located south of the Old City’s Armenian Quarter, Mount Zion was the highest point in ancient Jerusalem. In the Old Testament, Mount Zion was synonymous with the place known as the City of David, and the Jewish Temple Mount. Several important Christian events took place there, including the Last Supper, the appearance of Jesus before the high priest Caiaphas, believed to have been at the site of the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu and the Council of Jerusalem as detailed in Acts 15.

What does it mean to draw near to Mount Zion? The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that the assembly of the people of the new covenant is ultimately in the heavenly sanctuary. The tension between the “now” and the “not yet” of Christian existence is clearly illustrated here—the author speaks to those who are still on the journey to heaven. But since through faith they already possess in an anticipatory way the good things to come, he can also speak as if they have already arrived.

Most Americans do not see the purpose of the journey, but only in reaching the destination. Why travel by train when an airplane is much faster and not much more expensive? Lewis and Clark spent two years traversing across this great nation of ours on horseback and canoe, covering 4,600 miles. We get angry if our flight is delayed a half an hour.

*Quia fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te.*<sup>1</sup>  
“Because You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” This is among my favorite quotations from St. Augustine, whose feast day we observe today. I fondly recall my days rummaging through countless shelves in the seminary library, all for the purposes of locating the phrase just referenced that took me less than a half a second on Google when writing this homily.

And yet, are we any less restless even with the assistance of technology? Our reading from Hebrews is both a reminder and an invitation to see that our journey towards the Father is being fulfilled in the present and

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *Confessions*, I, 1.1

that the journey has its own meaning, not only the destination. At the end of time, the Kingdom of God will come in its fullness, and the universe itself will be renewed. In this new and heavenly Jerusalem, God will have his dwelling among us. The visible universe will be transformed, restored to its original state, and be at the service of the just.<sup>2</sup>

While our faith teaches that this world will pass away, we believe that God is preparing “a new earth where justice will abide and whose blessedness will answer and surpass all the longings for peace which spring up in the human heart.”<sup>3</sup> The moral of our Gospel parable is that when we take the lesser place, we will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous. Our journey here on earth is leading somewhere beautiful, but we are also called to help bring about that Kingdom by seeing our earthly life, not only as a preparation, but as a foretaste.

Our faith helps us to become the leaven in the world. When we celebrate the sacraments reverently, they can serve as a beacon of hope to a world that struggles to find the Sacred. Vatican II reminded us that “The Eucharist is an entry into the liturgy of heaven; by it we become contemporaries with Jesus Christ’s own act of worship...”<sup>4</sup> Sacred space draws us to that which is above; it becomes as it were, a slice of heaven. We need this slice of heaven, for it helps us remain focused on the end for which we were created. Amid all the changes in our lives, our loving Father is the constant, guiding us along the path.

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<sup>2</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. # 1044, 1047

<sup>3</sup> See *Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican Council II, # 39.1

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, page 70-71. In his writings on the sacred liturgy, Ratzinger drew important comparisons with the Jewish temple on Mount Zion, helping us to see that “on the altar, what the Temple had in the past foreshadowed is now present in a new way...thus it brings heaven into the community assembled on earth, or rather it takes that community beyond itself into the communion of saints of all times and places.”