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Some Ascension Day Thoughts

Ascension Island is reputedly so called because it was officially discovered on Ascension Day, 4th June 1503. At school I was taught that Ascension Day, like Easter and Pentecost, was a moveable feast. This conjured up a mental image of a groaning trolley of food being pushed from room to room. It was only later that I discovered the dating rationale for these moveable feasts. Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the full moon between 21st March and 18th April. The date of Ascension, always a Thursday, falls forty days after Easter Sunday. This year its date is 9th May.

In many countries, including Ascension Island, it is a public holiday. At my convent school it was considered a holiday on which we were taken on excursions. I presume the idea being that, as Christ made the journey of ascension into heaven, we should celebrate this feast with a pleasurable trip.

The Ascension of Christ has been a popular subject for artists particularly during the Renaissance. Usually the scene is divided into an upper heavenly section and the lower earthly section from which Christ ascends. But what message does the Ascension of Christ hold for the Christians in the 21st century? Perhaps, whatever our concept of this aspect of Christian belief, we can see it as the goodness within humanity gaining victory over and transcending, as Christ did, the evils and temptations of this world.

