



Pope Francis at Mass on Friday reflected on the Christian's earthly journey toward heaven, where we will be welcomed by the joy of a face-to-face encounter with Jesus.

The Holy Father drew inspiration from the First Reading taken from the Acts of the Apostles, which contains Paul's speech in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia.

Paul tells the Jews that the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their religious leaders did not recognize Jesus, condemning him to death. But he was raised from the dead.

Walk with the promise of God in our heart

Paul, said Pope Francis, calls Jesus' resurrection the fulfillment of God's Promise. He said that the people of God walked with this promise in their heart, knowing their status as "the elect". The Pope said that, even when they were unfaithful, "the people of God trusted in the promise, because they knew God is faithful."

"We, too, are in movement along the path. When asked where we are heading, we say, 'Towards heaven!' 'So what's heaven?' some ask. There we begin to be unsure in our response. We don't know how best to explain heaven. Often we picture an abstract and distant heaven... And some think: 'But won't it be boring there for all eternity?' No! That is not heaven. We are on the path towards an encounter: the final meeting with Jesus. Heaven is the encounter with Jesus."

Jesus prays for us

Pope Francis said we must often recall this idea: "I am travelling in life to meet Jesus." This meeting will make us happy forever, he said.

“But what does Jesus do in the meantime?” the Pope asked. As John’s Gospel points out, he said, Jesus is working for us and praying for us.

Pope Francis recalled Jesus’ words at the Last Supper, when he promises Peter he will pray for him.

“Each of us must say: ‘Jesus is praying for me, working to prepare me a place.’ He is faithful. He does so because he has promised it. Heaven will be this encounter, this meeting with the Lord who went ahead to prepare a place for each of us. This increases our faith.”

Jesus’ intercessory prayer

Finally, Pope Francis said Jesus is the priestly intercessor, right up to the end of the world.

“May the Lord give us the awareness of walking along a path with this promise. May the Lord give us the grace to look upwards toward heaven and think: ‘The Lord is praying for me’.”