

# The Ascension

*Here is a fragment of a letter Saint Catherine wrote to one of her followers whom she helped to become a Dominican [Letters v. ii]:*

Just as Peter and the others shut themselves up at home, so those who have come to love their Father and are his sons and daughters have done and ought to do. Those who want to progress to this state must enter and shut themselves up in the house of self-knowledge, which is the cell in which we should live.

And within this cell is another cell, the cell of the knowledge of God's goodness within us. From the knowledge of ourselves we draw a genuine humility, along with holy hatred for the offenses we have committed and continue to commit against our Creator. This leads to true and perfect patience. And in the knowledge of God which we discover within ourselves we acquire the virtue of blazing charity, from which we draw holy loving desires.

Staying shut up in such a lovely and glorious house as the knowledge of ourselves and of God is the way to learn watching and continual prayer. By watching I mean not just watching with our bodily eyes but watching with the eyes of our soul. I mean that the eyes of our understanding should never be closed but always open and focused on Christ crucified, ineffable love. There we discover love as well as our own sinfulness, since it was for sin that Christ gave his blood.

Then we rise up with immense desire to love what God loves and to hate what God hates. Everything we do we direct to God; we do everything for the glory and praise of his name. And this is the continual prayer of which Paul speaks: "Pray without interruption." This is how we progress beyond being merely servants and friends. That is, we progress from slavish fear and self-indulgent love for our own consolation to true servanthood, true friendship, true filiality.