

7th Sunday of Easter
Ascension
May 24, 2020
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I: The ASCENSION

Today we celebrate that sublime moment when Jesus – having completed his purpose on earth – ascended into Heaven. It is an event that transcends human history. It is his exaltation.

After Jesus assured his disciples that the Father was not abandoning them: “you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you...” St. Luke goes on to tell us – “as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.”

Spiritual writer, Andrew Walker expresses it in this way:

“This moment of farewell is not an end but a culmination of all that has gone before. From the Angel’s first greeting to Mary, from the wonder of Jesus’ birth, all things have been building to this point: the return of Jesus to his Father.”

In the Acts of the Apostles, the exaltation of Jesus is expressed in three temporally distinct stages: Resurrection, Ascension, and Conferral of the Holy Spirit. This extends over a period of 50 days: 40 days between the Resurrection and Ascension and 10 days between the Ascension and Pentecost.

The Psalmist exhorts us to “clap our hands and shout to God with cries of gladness,”

for, as it says in our Opening Prayer – “the Ascension of Christ is our exaltation” as well, “because where the Head has gone in glory, the Body (us) is called to follow in hope.”

II: The MISSION

“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” “There is much work to be done!” “Go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News of God’s love and mercy!”

Monika Hellwig: “The Ascension message is not to gaze up to where Jesus was last present but rather into the world, forward into history.”

We are not alone in this mission, Jesus assures us. The Holy Spirit, who the Father has sent accompanies us, guides us, encourages us, and empowers us. St. Paul, to the Ephesians: “May the eyes of your heart be enlightened ...that you may know the surpassing greatness of the power of the Spirit for us who believe.” It is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It is a universal mission: “to all nations.”

The Spirit empowers us for our mission in many ways. As believers we have access to the seven gifts of the Spirit. They are:

Wisdom – for the gift of discernment, to discover how we can best serve and help build the Kingdom of God.

Understanding – so that we may be people of empathy for those who suffer.

Counsel – a sort of supernatural intuition that enables us to judge rightly and counsel kindly those who are in difficult moral situations.

Fortitude – courage to carry our crosses; patient endurance; and a willingness to stand up for what is right even at the cost of persecution.

Knowledge – to know and believe in the First Commandment: “I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me.”

Piety – the quality of reverence in one’s prayer; “finding God in all things” ; living a reflective life in friendship with the Lord.

Fear of God – not a fear of punishment, but a reverential fear: creature to the Creator.

CONCLUSION

Let us give thanks to the Lord who is good, whose faithful love endures forever.
Who has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit to help us with our mission
of furthering the Kingdom of God by the way we live our life.
Grant we pray, Lord, that our hope in You may draw us onward to where
our nature will be united with You forever.

AMEN.