



# Mt. Hope Catholic Community

## St. John of God / St. Francis of Assisi / St. Dominic

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Thursday May 21 is the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Ironically, Ascension THURSDAY, as we know it, is only celebrated in the Church universal on a THURSDAY in Nebraska and the New England states in the US and in the Vatican. Everywhere else in the world, the holyday is transferred to the 7th Sunday of Easter. Go figure!

Even though we won't be in church this year to celebrate this feast either, some aspect of the feast are worth reflecting on. The Acts of the Apostles by Saint Luke describe the event. After Jesus told the gathered disciples that the Holy Spirit would come upon them so that they could be his witnesses, he was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were still looking up at the sky, two men "dressed in white" (a nice way to say angels) were suddenly standing next to them. The angels asked them why they were looking into the sky. This Jesus will come back one day in the same way that he left.

The Apostles in reality were standing there looking up because they didn't really know what else to do. They looked to Jesus for guidance and now that he was gone, they were unsure. This condition of theirs pretty much lasted until the Holy Spirit did come upon them at Pentecost. But in the meantime, they were "lost".

Jesus' going back to the Father probably seemed a tragedy for the Apostles initially even though he told them that he and the Father would send the Holy Spirit; even though he told them that he would one day return; even though he told them that he was going to prepare a place for them; even though he gave them the Eucharist which was to be done in remembrance of him. Not having the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and therefore not being able to avail themselves of that strength, they were paralyzed.

In our own lives of discipleship, and in our own prayer lives, sometimes we too may feel unsure or paralyzed. But Jesus' return to the Father was as much a gift to us as it was to the Apostles. We know that Jesus will return in glory one day. We know that he's gone to prepare a place for us. We know that we have the Eucharist (even if we can't right now go to church for the time being to receive it). And being born post-Pentecost, we have available to us the gifts and strength of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in his own flesh, had already made sacrifice for us. And his return to the Father shows us that he had every confidence in the Apostles to spread the gospel; live lives of faithful discipleship; and through their good works attain the grace of salvation. The fact that he has not returned in glory, but has continued to make the spiritual gifts given to the Apostles likewise available to us, he shows that the confidence that he had in them, he likewise has in us. That's a good thing, because the Ascension shows us that Jesus trusts us to know the details of good discipleship, and he trusts us to live it. It's up to us then to do it!

Sincerely in Christ,

(Rev.) Philip N. Hamel

Pastor

