

## Ascension A - 2020

### Forrest Gump Gets Something Right:

In 1994 Hollywood released a popular film called *Forrest Gump*, starring Tom Hanks in an Oscar-winning title role. The film can be base at times but has some interesting insights. At one point in the story, when Forrest is feeling rejected by the people he loves, he gets an urge to just start running. So, he walks out the door, jogs across the yard, and doesn't stop. In fact, when he gets to the ocean and runs out of road, he just turns around and runs the other way. Throughout his run, he is videotaped on national news. When asked why he's running - "World peace? Women's rights?" - he answers, "I'm just running." Unintentionally, he sparks a huge national following. The humorous and meaningful event that ends his journey takes place in the middle of a desert. Forrest stops, longhaired and long bearded, and turns around. The handful of sweaty joggers who have followed him shush each other: "Quiet, he's goanna say somethin'." "I'm kinda' tired," he says, "I think I'll go home now." Forrest walks through the small and silent crowd, and one of them yells after him, "Well, what are we supposed to do?!"

All people are looking for the answers to life's deepest questions. But since our thirst for truth and happiness is infinite (because that's how God made us), no finite worldly thing can satisfy us.

The characters in the film mindlessly following Tom Hanks' Gump personified that thirst for meaning. The fact that their hero abandons them without any explanation illustrates the inability of the things of this world (money, fame, politics, pleasure) to provide that meaning; eventually, we get tired of them; they let us down.

Only Christ is infinite goodness, power, and wisdom; only he is "the Way, Truth, and the Life" that we are searching for. (E- Priest).

### "Dr. Carpenter is upstairs."

Many years ago, there lived a very poor family in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina by the name of Carpenter. The oldest boy loved the outdoors and knew them well, but he didn't know much else. He was a teenager before his father took him on his first trip to the city, where he saw paved streets, skyscrapers, and electricity for the first time. The boy

wanted to stay there and get an education. His father arranged for him to board with some family friends, who generously financed his studies when he decided to become a doctor. He graduated with honors, but declined all job offers to practice medicine in the city. He said he was going back to the mountains, where there were many sick people and few doctors.

For many years he ministered to the sick. Some paid, most couldn't. He gave his very best and helped everyone he could. In his old age he was in broken health himself and almost penniless. Two small rooms above the town grocery store were his home and office. At the foot of the creaky stairs leading up to his office was a sign with these words: "Dr. Carpenter is upstairs." One morning someone climbed those stairs to find the devoted doctor dead. The entire community was plunged in grief.

They wanted to erect some kind of monument to him. But they decided to simply write these words on a large tombstone: "Dr. Carpenter is upstairs."

Jesus is the Divine Doctor of our souls. He is "upstairs" in Heaven, where he ascended after his Resurrection. But he is still alive and eager to help us through the Sacraments, the Bible, and the Church. Every time we turn to him in prayer, we climb the stairs to his office. Because he is upstairs, Dr. Jesus is always in. [This illustration adapted from *Stories for Sermons*, Vol. 2, by Fr. Arthur Tonne, p12.] (E- Priest).

#### St. Paschal Baylon Visits the King:

We don't think much about this, but it is the truth behind everything we believe. If Christ had not ascended into Heaven, we would not be able to pray to him at any time and in any place and we would not be able to have him close by in the Eucharist, because he would still be limited by time and space.

One of the saints whom the Church commemorates on May 17, thought about this truth a lot, and learned to take advantage of it. St Paschal Baylon was a Spanish peasant, a shepherd for the first 24 years of his life. He could barely read, but he loved Christ, and he had a special understanding of Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist. He had to stay with his sheep from dawn to dark, which made it impossible for him to go to Mass every day. So, he did the next best thing. At the hour Mass was being celebrated, he

would kneel on the hillsides, gazing at the Church in the valley, and pray, uniting himself to Christ Who was renewing his sacrifice and presence through the priest's ministry.

Eventually, St Paschal found his vocation to become a religious brother. He joined the local Franciscan community and encouraged everyone by his virtue, joy, and good humor. During free moments between duties, he could almost always be found in the chapel, speaking with Christ in the Eucharist.

To casual onlookers he was kneeling on a hard-stone floor here on earth, but in truth he was enjoying the presence of our King who sits forever on his throne in Heaven. He died when he was only fifty-two, at the very moment that the bell rang to signify the consecration at Mass. (E-Priest).