

May 10, 2018, The Ascension of the Lord

The Ascension is an interesting feast when you think about it. We celebrate Jesus leaving! Jesus' first departure from the earth was sudden and unexpected, at least to his followers. That Good Friday departure was characterized by sorrow, confusion, and loss. This departure has a different feel: anticipation.

Today's Gospel is full of the mighty deeds Jesus predicts for his followers. "In my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents [with their hands], and if they drink any deadly thing it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

Mark's account of the Ascension is abrupt and succinct. "Then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven." Jesus ascends, and the Apostles go. "But they went forth and preached everywhere." The real moment likely had a bit of lag time. Realistically, the Apostles had quite the task in front of them. Can you imagine those first few moments on the hilltop after Jesus disappeared, as the Apostles met each other's eyes? "This is it. He really is gone this time. It's up to us now."

Mark's abrupt transition from Ascension to action makes his meaning clear. The Ascension isn't just about Jesus. It's about us. Are we ready to go? Are we ready to be commissioned? This is the heart of the Ascension message - Jesus leaves so we can go. We might not "go into the whole world," but we all live in a corner of it. The command to "proclaim the Gospel" isn't a call for everyone to be formal preachers of the Word. We do, however, proclaim our beliefs with the way we live our lives. Do our lives proclaim Easter joy?

What the Ascension Really Means to Us Today

Where will you go when it is time for retirement? Maybe you are already in your golden years and enjoying some well-deserved relaxation. Did you plan well? Finances can be a little tighter than anticipated, and maybe that house that held up all those years now needs a little work. Life is never exactly the way we planned it or envisioned it. Life always has the tendency to take us by surprise.

In terms of what comes next after this earthly life, we know there is a place prepared for those who love the Lord and heed his words. We do not know what it looks like or exactly which people we will see there, but we know it is better than anything we have experienced previously in life. This place, not defined by human perceptions of space and time, is eternal and perfect, and it is where Jesus sits at the right hand of God.

The Ascension of the Lord provides for us a hope that, after whatever trials of this life we experience, there is rest in the Savior's arms. The Incarnation, God made flesh, rose from the dead and now is with the Father so that we could rise from the dead and live eternally with the Father. This is good news!



A huge "Thank You!" is extended to everyone - parents, catechists, volunteers, Fr. Jason, Deacon Jimmy, Deacon Leon, liturgical ministers – all who helped to make our First Eucharist celebrations and receptions at St. Joseph and St. Stephen on May 6, 2018, so special for our young Catholic faithful.

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