

# FAITH AND REASON

**The Holy Father on Ascension Sunday:** Dear Brothers and Sisters, Buongiorno! Today in Italy and in many countries, the Ascension of the Lord, that is, his return to the Father, is being celebrated. In the Liturgy, the Gospel according to Luke narrates the final apparition of the Risen Christ to the disciples (cf. 24:46-53). The earthly life of Jesus culminates precisely with the Ascension, which we also profess in the Creed: "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father". What does this event mean? How should we interpret it? To answer this question, let us focus on two actions that Jesus performs before ascending into Heaven: first of all, he announces the gift of the Spirit, and then he blesses the disciples. He announces the gift of the Spirit, and he blesses.

First of all, Jesus says to his friends: "I send the promise of my Father upon you" (v. 49). He is talking about the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, he who will accompany them, guide them, support them in their mission, and defend them in spiritual battles. We thus understand something important: Jesus is not abandoning the disciples. He ascends to Heaven, but he does not leave them alone. Rather, precisely by ascending towards the Father, he ensures the effusion of the Holy Spirit, of his Spirit. On another occasion he had said: "It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counsellor will not come to you", — that is, the Spirit — (Jn 16:7). In this too, we see Jesus' love for us: his is a presence that does not want to limit our freedom. On the contrary, he leaves space to us, because true love always generates a closeness that does not stifle, is not possessive, is close but not possessive; indeed, true love makes us protagonists. And in this way, Christ reassures, "I will go to the Father, and you will be clothed with power from on high: I will send you my Spirit and with his strength, you will continue my work in the world!" (cf. Lk 24:49). Thus, ascending to Heaven, instead of remaining beside a few people with his body, Jesus becomes close to all with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus present in us, beyond the barriers of time and space, to make us his witnesses in the world.

Straight afterwards — it is the second action — Christ raises his hands and blesses the apostles (cf. v. 50). It is a priestly gesture. Ever since the times of Aaron, God had entrusted the task of blessing the people to priests (cf. Nm 6:36). The Gospel wants to tell us that Jesus is the great priest of our life. Jesus ascends to the Father to intercede on our behalf, to present our humanity to him. Thus, before the eyes of the Father, with the humanity of Jesus, there are and always will be our lives, our hopes, our wounds. So, as he makes his "exodus" to Heaven, Christ "makes way" for us. He goes to prepare a place for us and, from this time forth, he intercedes for us, so that we may always be accompanied and blessed by the Father.

Brothers and sisters, let us think today of the gift of the Spirit we have received from Jesus to be witnesses of the Gospel. Let us ask ourselves if we really are and also, if we are capable of loving others, leaving them free and making room for them. And then: do we know how to make ourselves intercessors for others, that is, do we know how to pray for them and bless their lives? Or do we serve others for our own interests? Let us learn this: intercessory prayer, interceding for the hopes and sufferings of the world, interceding for peace. And let us bless with our eyes and our words those we meet every day! Now let us pray to Our Lady, blessed among women, who, filled with the Holy Spirit, always prays and intercedes for us.

**Living in Accordance with the Truth of our Being:** Love is not dependence but a gift that makes us live. The freedom of a human being is the freedom of a limited being, and therefore in itself limited. We can possess it only as a shared freedom, in the communion of freedom: only if we live in the right way, with one another and for one another, can freedom develop. We love in the right way if we live in accordance with the truth of our being, and that is in accordance with God's will.

For God's will is not a law for the human being imposed from the outside and that constrains him, but the measure of his nature, a measure that is engraved and makes him the image of God, hence, a free creature. If we live in opposition to love and against the truth in opposition to God then we destroy one another and destroy the world. Then we do not find life but act in the interests of death. If we sincerely reflect on ourselves and our history, we have to say that we all carry within us a drop of poison of that way of thinking. We call this drop of poison "original sin".

We have a lurking suspicion that a person who does not sin must really be basically boring and that something is missing from his life: the dramatic dimension of being autonomous ; that is the freedom to say no, to descend into the shadows of sin and to want to do things on one's own, is part of being truly human; that only then can we make the most of all the vastness and depth of our being men and women, of being truly ourselves; that we should put this freedom to the test, even in opposition to God, in order to become, in reality, fully ourselves .... **Pope Benedict XVI**

**Imagine yourself as a living house.** God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself... **C.S. Lewis**

**Prayer and Action:** As Christians we know that for us prayer is as essential as breathing, and once we have tasted the sweetness of intimate conversation with God, we do not hesitate to immerse ourselves in it with trusting abandonment. The deep unity between prayer and action is at the basis of all spiritual renewal, especially among the faithful. It is at the basis of the great enterprises of evangelization and construction of the world according to God's plan ... **St John Paul II**

#### **A Thought For the Day**

**Sunday** When we lose one blessing, another is often most unexpectedly given in its place.  
**Monday** Beware of doubt -faith is the subtle chain that binds us to God.  
**Tuesday** The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.  
**Wednesday** Duty does not have to be dull. Love can make it beautiful and fill it with life.  
**Thursday** Let us practice many acts of kindness and gentle charity toward those we like the least.  
**Friday** Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy.  
**Saturday** In a world of noise, confusion, and conflict it is necessary there be places of silence, inner discipline, and peace.

#### **No matter how lowly a person may be:**

Will he seek his way through the Scriptures with the staff of faith in his hand.  
Will he hold that staff and search out his way with it.  
Will he have the holy, ancient teachers of the Church as his guide as well.  
Will he make his way with good intentions and a lowly heart.  
Will he use reason and refuse no good learning.  
Will he call on God for wisdom, grace, and help that he may keep his way and follow his good guides.  
Then he will never fall into danger, but he will wade through surely and well.  
And he will come to the end of his journey at the place for which he was searching... **St Thomas More**

**How open are we to receive God's Grace:** Take to heart this analogy, which will show you how the grace of God comes to us. Do you see these windows? One of them is completely open. Another is open, but only a little way. Yet another window is closed. Some of God's sunlight will enter that house by way of the windows that are tightly shut, because there are certain tiny crevices in them. And through every one of these windows something of the splendor of the sun shines in. But in some places it is more, and in some less. Why? Because more or less brightness enters the house according to whether each window is more or less open. So it is with those who wish for grace from God. They will receive grace according to how they are disposed to receive it. If they show themselves very well disposed, God gives them a lot of grace. But if they show themselves only poorly disposed, then God gives them only a little grace. And even those who shut themselves off from grace altogether, God would be willing to give his grace, if only they would open themselves to it..... **St Bernardine of Siena**

*The essence of God is existence, and He defines Himself as: "I am Who am." The essence of the devil is the lie, and he defines himself as: "I am who am not." Satan has very little trouble with those who do not believe in him; they are already on his side.*  
**Fulton J. Sheen**

**In His Will is Our Peace**  
**Fr. William C. Mooney**

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