



Stairway to Heaven

MIGUEL DULICK

Even by the Ascension, after forty days of eating and drinking with the resurrected Lord, the obtuseness of the Apostles still frustrates Jesus. In Acts, they're ready for a fight, "to restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). Matthew reports that "they worshiped, but they doubted" (Matthew 28:17). Pentecost cannot come soon enough, when they will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and all will be made known.

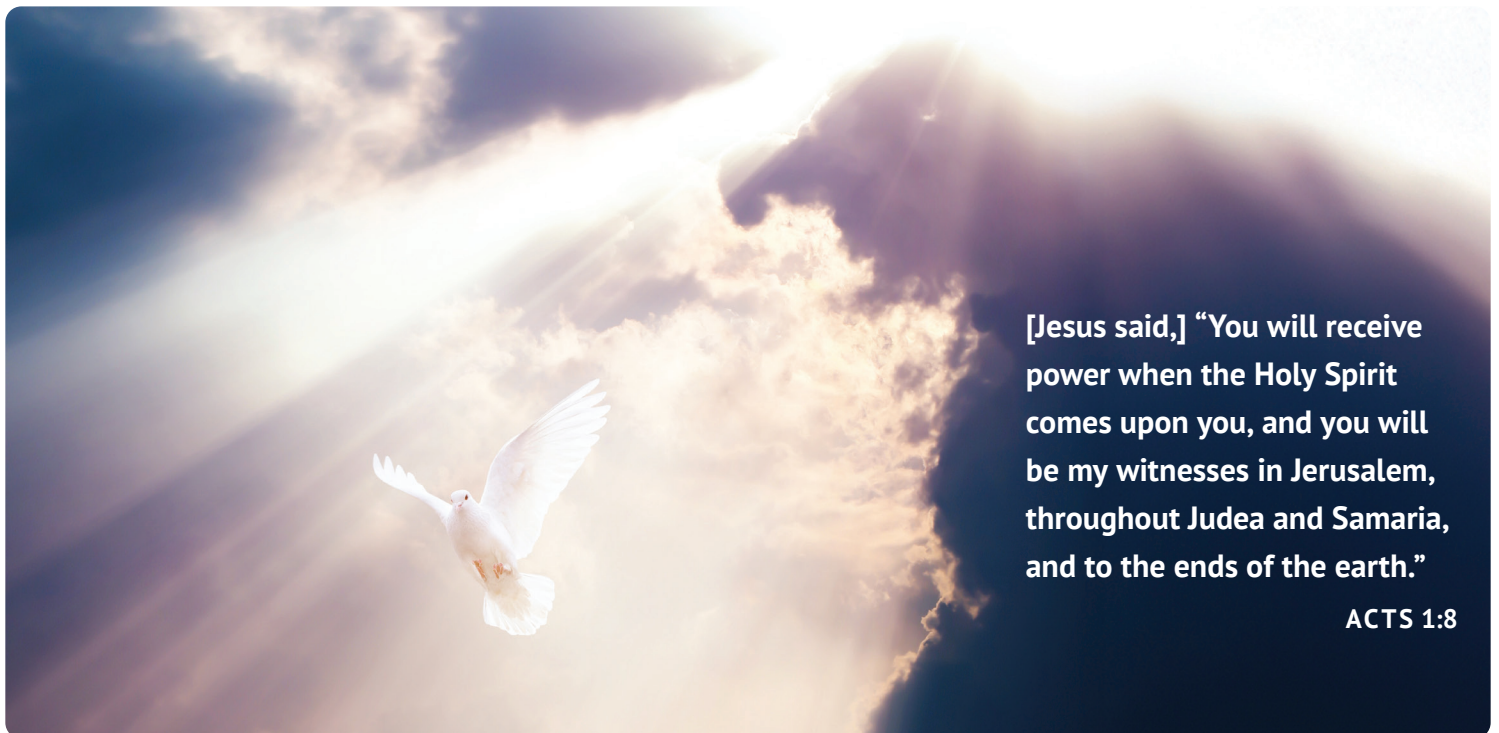
So the next nine days are crucial. The apostles and other disciples, 120 persons in all, prepare for the arrival of the Holy Spirit, a spiritual retreat, the original "novena." Only then can the apostle go and "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

Jesus, who brought heaven down to earth in the Incarnation, now ascends, taking earth up to heaven, with his resurrection. Saint Paul gives us a hint of how special this interchange is when he wishes for the Ephesians to receive from Jesus "a Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (Ephesians 1:17).

Our own obtuseness can block the Holy Spirit when we think we have all the answers. When I first preached in Honduras, in the village where I live, I was so prepared. I said everything I could think of, all that I had learned in my courses for a masters degree in divinity. But then, when I heard the prayers and insights of poor and simple folks, supported by a rich, personal knowledge of the Lord himself, I cut my sermons in half and let the "saints," as St. Paul liked to call the people, finish the job. Thank you, Holy Spirit! ●



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[Jesus said,] "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

ACTS 1:8

Reflect

How can I better cooperate with the Holy Spirit?

Dear Padre,

I am scared of the end times and predictions of these dates. I feel saved, but I don't truly know if I would be accepted into heaven. What are the Catholic teachings on the end times/rapture?

No one but our heavenly Father knows the precise time of our Lord's return. (See Mark 13:32-37.) If this uncertainty about when Jesus will return evokes more apprehension than anticipation, it doesn't help that prophets of doom make predictions based on a distorted understanding of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. An example of this literary form includes the Book of Revelation. It contains elements of a final judgment and cosmic struggle between good and evil written in highly symbolic and imaginative language; however, it wasn't intended to provide a literal description or timeline of how the world ends. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, St. Paul also uses apocalyptic imagery to say that all the faithful will be "caught up" ("rapt up") to meet the Lord at his Coming. Some use this single text to vividly imagine true believers being "raptured" from the earth and escaping the destruction of humankind at the end times, but it's a misinterpretation. For Catholics, these apocalyptic passages offer hope and guidance: despite the powerful forces of evil, Christ will overcome. His death and resurrection already ushered in the last age. We don't know how long this age will last before the final consummation, hence the need to be watchful and prepared. ●



BILLION PHOTOS / SHUTTERSTOCK

Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Do you have a question for the Padre?

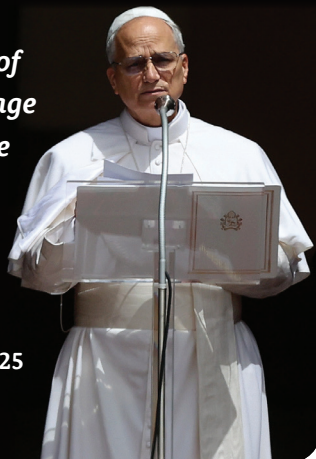
Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.

A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

Where are you...when the poor are blamed for their poverty, forgotten and discarded, in a world that values profit more than people? [W]here are you in a hyper-connected life where loneliness corrodes social bonds and makes us strangers even to ourselves?...

Fraternity...means rediscovering the face of the other...the very image of God in the face of the poor, the refugee, and even the adversary.

ADDRESS TO MEETING
ON FRATERNITY, ROME,
SEPTEMBER 12, 2025



MARCO IACOBELLI EPP / SHUTTERSTOCK

Monday

May 18
Easter Weekday
Acts 19:1-8
Jn 16:29-33

Tuesday

May 19
Easter Weekday
Acts 20:17-27
Jn 17:1-11a

Wednesday

May 20
Easter Weekday
Acts 20:28-38
Jn 17:11b-19

Thursday

May 21
Easter Weekday
Acts 22:30; 23:6-11
Jn 17:20-26

Friday

May 22
Easter Weekday
Acts 25:13b-21
Jn 21:15-19

Saturday

May 23
Easter Weekday
Acts 28:16-20, 30-31
Jn 21:20-25

Sunday

May 24
Pentecost Sunday
Acts 2:1-11
1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13
Jn 20:19-23