

***WHAT IS THE REAL MEANING OF THE
LORD'S ASCENSION?***

Feast of the Ascension

Year B

Ac 1:1-11; Ps 47:2-3,6-9; Ep 4:1-13; Mk 16:15-20

The priest was talking about heaven in his homily saying: “We bring nothing with us when we die. There is no money in heaven! People in heaven have no money!”

The whole congregation was quiet, till a little girl whispered to her mother loud enough for all to hear: “Mama, mama, we’re in heaven already!”

Today we’re celebrating the Feast of Jesus’ Ascension. What is the real meaning of the Lord’s Ascension? If we ask Mr. Webster, he says: “Ascension is the act of moving upward of Jesus Christ into heaven.”

Let’s consider this story of a Russian cosmonaut who several years ago when he returned from a successful flight to outer space, sarcastically remarked: “We’ve gone up to heaven, but we did not find God there.” This poor Russian cosmonaut was speaking merely on the level of physical and material, as was Mr. Webster.

Jesus’ Ascension means not so much a ‘space travel’ as implied by the Russian cosmonaut, but that Christ entered a ‘new dimension’...an unseen but definitive presence which is the spiritual

or immaterial. His Ascension signifies His exaltation as universal sovereign Lord of heaven after a fruitful life on earth.

Now, according to the Church, Ascension is thus described: “He ended His bodily presence on earth.” This happened 40 days after His resurrection. Another meaning is: “The Lord has left and gone up into heaven, yet remains with us.” This means that our life has to end just like that of the physical body of Christ who died. We too must die. If Christ ascended into heaven in His resurrected body, we too must go there in our resurrected body. If everything has an end, so whatever goodness we can do, do it now and do not delay. What you can do today, do not leave it for tomorrow.

Another meaning of Ascension is that: “Ascension is to go back to the source of who the Father is.” Jesus returned to God the Father, the Source.

So, what is really the reason why Jesus ascended into heaven? Could it be to help us in this world to carry out His mission? The reasons are scriptural: in order to praise God (Jn 17), in order to

become our Savior and Prince of Peace (Acts 5), to lead us and open the gate for us (Heb 6), and to prepare our place in heaven (Jn 14).

Jesus has ascended into Heaven; does this mean that He is no longer with us? What do you think? Jesus is still with us today. It's because he said that "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers/sisters, you do this to me." He said also towards the end of St. Matthew's gospel: "I am with you until the end of the world."

So, what is the command of Jesus for us today?

The first is that we should preach. What are those things that we should preach to others? The good news of salvation that we are loved by God even if we are sinners; that we are brothers and sisters to each other; that life has dignity, meaning, and that we too have dignity; that death is the only way towards eternal life.

That's why all of us are called in order to preach and to teach. Busy people are not exempted from this mission. They just make as an escape goat that they're too busy, but the truth is they're just too lazy to preach the good news. They are afraid to tell the truth and they are already feel self-sufficient. Preaching is not only to be done

within the church, but also in the office, in the workplace, in homes...everywhere! And how do we really preach? As St. Francis tells us: “Preach! But when you have to, use words!”

Take the story of Ruddell Norris. He was a conscientious young man. But he was also a shy young man. He found it hard just to talk to people, much less to discuss religion with them.

Then one day he got an idea. Ruddell did a lot of reading and he was aware of the many pamphlets about the Catholic faith. So, he decided to set aside a part of his weekly allowance to buy pamphlets.

Ruddell placed his pamphlets in places where he thought people would pick them up and read them. For example, he placed them in waiting rooms and in reception areas.

One day a young woman who was a friend of his family told his parents how she became a convert and how her husband returned to the Church. “It all started with a pamphlet,” she said, “I found it in the hospital waiting room.”

You can imagine the boy's excitement when he learned of the impact just one of his pamphlets had.

The second command of Jesus for us today is that we should heal. We should become a healer, not in the way of a doctor.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, to heal is: "to free from disease or accident, restore to health and to cure." But there is another meaning: "to restore a person from some evil condition or affliction like sin, grief, despair, unwholesomeness, danger or destruction; to save, to purify, cleanse, repair or mend."

All of us are called to become healers...not only as physical healers, but also as psychological and spiritual healers...and not tomorrow, but today. I believe that many souls could be in danger of hell because they postpone doing their good deeds for others.

Lastly, we should be witnesses, not just in words but also most especially in action. As St. Augustine said: "Believe what you preach. Teach what you believe and live it."

There was a certain man who wanted to be remembered by people and so, this was what he did. He wrote his name on the sand,

but the waves of the sea came and washed it away. So, he wrote his name on a tree, but the sap of that tree erased his words. He wrote his name on a stone, but a stonecutter came and cut the stone into pieces. So, the Lord appeared to him and said: “Are you crazy? Why did you write your name in the sand, on the tree and on the stone? Write your name on the hearts of the people and you will be remembered forever.” Ask ourselves if we have already started to write our names on the hearts of many people.

Let’s reflect on these words by John McArdle: “I believe that the road to heaven is heaven. Just like the road to hell is hell. I believe heaven starts now. For someone who doesn’t understand that, they might imagine that the road to heaven is hell, they think it’s tough; and some other people, worse still, could imagine that the road to hell is heaven, it’s great fun.” May God give us the enlightenment to see the difference!

May God Bless You All!