

The Ascension of the Lord

“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” With these words in Sunday’s first Scripture reading, two angels gently admonished the Apostles who were looking intently upward as Jesus ascended to Heaven. (Acts 1:1-11). As Pope Francis reflects, “the Ascension exhorts us to lift our gaze toward heaven, in order to return it immediately to the earth, to implement the tasks that the Risen Lord entrusts to us.” (Regina Caeli, May 13, 2018).

Jesus instructed his disciples prior to His Ascension, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Therefore, the abiding significance of the Ascension in our daily spiritual lives is two-fold. First, Jesus remains ever with us, guiding us through His Sanctifying Grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, which we received in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Second, as members of the Body of Christ, we are His witnesses to all persons to the ends of the earth.

Our response to this boundless grace and love from Christ should be one of profound faith, hope and showing of charity to our Neighbor. As our second Scripture reading on Sunday urges, “... let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed in pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope, for he who made the promise is trustworthy.” (Hebrews, 10:19-23).

There is an old saying: ‘If we were accused of being Christians, would there be sufficient evidence to convict us?’ As baptized Catholics, we are enabled through Christ’s grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to spread His message of Love and Truth. This charity, of course, begins within our families. Beyond family, our spreading of the Good News extends to our friends, our workplace and schools, our community and to all those in need.

We take to heart and strive to live Christ’s teaching in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:1-10). There are countless opportunities to show, through use of our time, our God-given talents and our stewardship, charity for our Neighbor in need: for the poor, the sick, the vulnerable and the oppressed.

Just as Mary and the original disciples prayed fervently after the Ascension awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 1:13-14), we are invited to pray this week for the continued guidance of the Holy Spirit in our lives, for the grace to rededicate ourselves to spreading Christ’s message of Love and Truth, and for the intercession of Mary, our Blessed Mother in heaven.

Peace,

Deacon Don