



Bible Study Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Year B

St. Peter Claver
Parish

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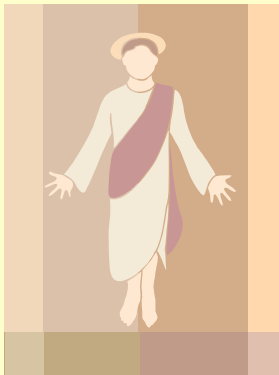
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"Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; ..." Mk. 16; 15-16

Reading I: Acts 1:1-11

He is still here. Have you ever felt the presence of someone long after they have left. Sometimes when a person leaves a room we hear sounds like they are still present. Often when a loved one has died we still think of them in the present as though they are still alive with us. This is the same image that is given to us in the first reading, He is still here. He may have completed His work on this earth, but he is still here.

To understand Acts, we must remember that it is a volume 2 of Luke. It is a continuation of the account of the work of the Holy Spirit by the author of the Gospel of Luke. Jesus prepared His disciples for their mission during



" ... After he spoke to them He was taken up into heaven..."

His life. He appeared to them some forty days after His death and resurrection. The forty days is not a precise number of days. It is reminiscent of forty years in the desert of Moses and the escape of the Jews from Egypt. (Lk. 4:1-2 and Exodus.) In His Gospel, Luke treated the Ascension as the last event on Easter Day. In Acts, he dates it forty days later. He was more concerned with the importance of the event than the date. Note v.9, the disciples actually saw Jesus taken into heaven. This is a reminder of 2 Kings 2:4-15. The promise of the Holy Spirit upon Elisha would only be fulfilled if he saw Elijah taken up into heaven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Do you see a parallel in the lives of the disciples and Elisha? When did they receive the Holy Spirit?

The Ascension or the Seventh Sunday after Easter

This week the Church provides a rich selection of readings. Some dioceses celebrate the feast of the Ascension on Thursday, so on Sunday the readings from the Seventh Sunday of Easter will be used. Others will celebrate the feast on Sunday and use the readings of the Ascension on Sunday instead of the readings for the Seventh Sunday of Easter. We will follow the latter and discuss the readings from the feast of the Ascension.

Reading II: Ephesians 4:1-13

He is still here. Usually when someone leaves us we feel a sense of loss. After the Ascension, the disciples may have thought that they were abandoned. No, He did not abandon them. He remained with them and remains with us in the work that He provided for us, to preach the Gospel. This reading explains the virtues necessary for us to "preach the gospel" effectively. These virtues are: humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

Verses 1-16 are a general plea for unity in the church. The Holy Spirit has fashioned Christians into one religious community (one body v.12). In contrast to a world that serves many gods, we are committed to one way of salvation. That is salvation through life in unity with Jesus the Christ. We are called to one faith, one Lord, one Baptism. (v.6). He is still here.

Christian unity is more than unity of beliefs. It is the manifestation of Christ to each one of us, which we share in communion with Him. This is how the community becomes more Christ-like. The teaching that Christ is the source of the gifts is introduced by v. 8, which refers to Psalm 68:18 showing Yahweh leading Israel triumphantly into Jerusalem. It is here that we understand that Christ has ascended above all and is the head of the Church. DISCUSSION QUESTION: Why does God give certain people gifts? What gifts have you received? At the end of our lives will we be able to say this about our gifts, "See, God, I used them?"

Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

He is still here. Later, on Resurrection Sunday when the apostles were gathered at table, Jesus appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of hearts (v.16). The death of Jesus on the Cross, and His resurrection from death was exceeded by his ascension into heaven. Yet the apostles did not believe those who saw

Him after he had risen. He was still with them yet they did not believe. This was a familiar theme in the Gospel of Mark (6:52) He uses the theme of unbelief to demonstrate the importance of belief in the resurrection. An essential tenant of the faith system of all Christians is that Jesus is alive. He is still here.

Jesus scolding of the disciples prepares them for their commission, "...to proclaim the Gospel to every creature." This commission is given in Luke 24:47 and Mat. 28:18-20. The Gospel of Christ is therefore destined for the entire world. But this Gospel is not for the lukewarm or faint hearted. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. He will be with them. Whoever does not believe will be condemned. Not that God has abandoned them, but rather because they have abandoned Him.

The supernatural signs and wonders that will accompany not only the apostles, but the ordinary church, are recorded in scripture (John 14:12-14; Mk. 3:14; Acts. 8:5-7). The impact of these signs is that just as Jesus always accompanied His preaching of the Gospel with works of healing and deliverance, the Church is called to do the same. The preaching of the Gospel is not by our words but in the way we live. The sign of our commitment to the one Lord is our commitment to love as He did. The fruit of that love will remain.

The ending of the Gospel is probably influenced by Luke 24:50-51 and Acts 1:9-11. Jesus is called Lord, which is a reference to His divine essence. That Jesus is taken into heaven and seated at the right hand of God is fulfillment of His prophecy before the Sanhedrin (14:62). This is the seat of the highest honor according to Ps. 110 that belongs to Jesus, who sits as King over all.

His enthronement in heaven does not mean He is absent from earth. He has been present throughout the centuries in the works of the church. DISCUSSION QUESTION: Is He still here in you? How is His presence in you shown?

Pray About it.

Monday

Read 2 Kings 2:4-15. How do you think Elisha felt?

Tuesday

Speak kindly of someone who has harmed you.

Wednesday

Donate to the St. Vincent DePaul Society.

Thursday

Ask God to show you how to use your gifts.

Friday

Read John 14:12-14.

ASCENSION OF CHRIST

The Ascension of Christ is the dramatic departure of the risen Christ from His earthly, bodily ministry among His followers. Since His birth in Bethlehem by the miracle of the incarnation, Christ had lived physically on earth. But 40 days after the resurrection, His earthly ministry ceased with His ascension into heaven ([Mark 16:19](#); [Luke 24:50-51](#); [Acts 1:9-11](#)). To a large extent the ascension was for the benefit of Jesus' followers. They could no longer expect His physical presence. They must now wait for the promised Holy Spirit through whom the work of Jesus would continue.

Jesus' departure into heaven was a bodily ascension in His resurrection body. Stephen and Paul both reported seeing Jesus in bodily form after His ascension ([Acts 7:56](#); [9:27](#); [1 Cor 15:8](#)).

The ascension marked the beginning of Christ's intercession for His followers at the right hand of God. There He makes continual intercession for all believers ([Rom 8:34](#); [Heb 4:14](#); [6:20](#); [7:25](#)). Although Christ is not physically present with His people today, He is no less concerned for them or less active on their behalf. Christians enjoy peace, hope, and security because Christ is their advocate with the Father ([1 John 2:1](#)).

The ascension set in motion the coming of the Holy Spirit with His gifts for believers ([John 14:16-18,26](#); [16:7-15](#); [Acts 2:23](#); [Eph 4:11-12](#)). God determined that the presence of Jesus would be replaced by the presence of the Holy Spirit, who could be everywhere at the same time.

Resources: *Preaching the Lectionary: The Word of God for the Church Today* Reginald H. Fuller. pp. 204-276, The Liturgical Press. 1984 (Revised Edition) pp. 265-267. *The Collegeville Bible Commentary – New Testament, Acts of the Apostles*, William S. Kurz, S.J pp 1037-38; Ephesians, Neal M. Flanagan, O.S.M. 1194-95; Ascension of Christ Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in the Adult Faith Formation Ministry at St. Peter Claver Parish in New Orleans, La. ©2012