

ASCENSION OF THE LORD

MAY 24, 2020

HOMILY

St Pope Leo, the Great, lived in the 5th century. In a homily for Ascension Sunday he said this,
“The Ascension of Christ increases faith.”

When we celebrate this feast of the Ascension we do not immediately see the truth of this statement. What we see is Jesus leaving us—going away from us, abandoning us, making us orphans. The Apostles, too, in the first reading, thought this right at the moment of his Ascension, wondering if this was the time when the Lord would *“restore the Kingdom of Israel”*. They were expecting him to remain with them. They didn’t get it. So it is not surprising that we often don’t get it, wondering why he had to ascend, why he had to leave us.

He had to leave us to be our Hope of everlasting life. Where he has gone, we hope to follow. Because he has ascended, he is no longer limited to one physical place: the Holy Land. Now he is present everywhere in his Mystical Body, the Church. He is truly present in the Scriptures, in Baptism, in Confession. And he is really present in his Body and Blood in the Eucharist. We see him, not with our human sight, but with the eyes of faith. We are bale to do this through the promise he makes in this first reading from the Acts of the Apostles: *“...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...”*.

St Leo finished his homily in these words, “And so our Redeemer’s visible presence has passed into the sacraments. Our faith is nobler and stronger because sight has been replaced by a doctrine whose authority is accepted by believing hearts, enlightened from on high.”

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...”

The words of Jesus at the Ascension in today’s Gospel. This is the mission of the entire Church, it is not only the mission of priests, nuns, sisters, and brothers: it is the mission of every member of the Church, every Catholic. How is this so? Our Baptism makes us priests, prophets, and kings. What does a prophet do? The dictionary tells us, “a prophet is a person who is an inspired teacher of the will of God”. And the will of God, as given in today’s Gospel, is to *“make disciples of all nations”*. Everyone of us because we are Baptized are to go out and tell the world about God’s will for us—that we may come to know of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Mothers and fathers do this when they Baptize their children, teach them to pray, bring them to Church, prepare them for the Sacraments of first Eucharist, first Confession, and Confirmation. At work, Catholics who make the sign of the cross as they say the grace before a meal are proclaiming God’s desire to save us all; God’s desire to be worshipped, to be known. Last Sunday, St Peter told us to be *“...always ready to...”* explain *“...the hope that is in you”*. What is this hope? It is a hope that is alive in us through the Holy Spirit; a hope that death is not the end because God’s Son has defeated it in the Resurrection. If we tell those who do not have this hope that God wants them to have it too, that all they have to do is believe in Christ and be Baptized, we are being prophets. *“...Make disciples of all the nations...”* is the commission of our Lord on this Ascension Sunday. He has given us, the Church, this task. St Teresa of Avila explains it in these words,

“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

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Prayer of the Faithful—Ascension Sunday—May 24, 2020

Leader:

Let ask the Good Lord to watch over us
and all of our brothers and sisters.

LECTOR: Christ, Graciously Hear Us

You have given Archbishop Collins as our spiritual Father; fill him with the Holy Spirit, and through his preaching and ministry sanctify us in the Truth:

We pray...

You have given us this World Day of Prayer for the Church in China so that our brothers and sisters in this persecuted Church, through our intercession, may know your peace:

We pray...

Many of your children facing the distress of poverty and hunger, now face the presence of the Covid 19 pandemic, may we not forget their need, give us the grace to come to their assistance:

We pray...

Your people of St John XXIII ask for your presence in this time of trouble: be with us, let us not despair, fill us with your gift of hope, lift up our hearts in trust of your love for us:

We pray...

Christ, our Lord, visit the sick with healing power and new hope: (especially) Candelabra Ferolino; Munchie Reyes; Aisha Miranda; Rodolfo Macapagal; Marie James; _____

We pray...

Bless all who have died in your Christ (especially): those who have died from the virus; and also, Fr Bob Reddy; _____

We pray...

In our silence now, let the light of your presence shine in us (PAUSE):

We Pray...

Leader:

Father,
we sing your praises
for you have taken your Son Jesus
into your glory
and given to him a Name above all names.

May we reverence him,
who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

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SUNDAY READINGS

First reading

Acts 1:1-11 ©

Jesus was lifted up while they looked on

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptized with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.'

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 46(47):2-3,6-9

Second reading

Ephesians 1:17-23 ©

God made him sit at his right hand in heaven

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named not only in this age but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet and made him, as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

Gospel Acclamation

Mt28:19,20

Alleluia, alleluia!

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Go, make disciples of all the nations.

I am with you always; yes, to the end of time. Alleluia!

Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20 ©

Go and make disciples of all nations

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'