

ASCENSION A

There is no doubt that today's readings tell of Jesus ascension into his heavenly glory and what that means to us.

After promising to send the Holy Spirit, who would come as the source of Heavenly power for his Disciples, Jesus commanded them to be his witnesses, by their lives and their preaching, throughout the world.

We believe that Jesus has ascended, but we know also that he is still with us in spirit. His promise, "I am with you always, yes to the end of time", reminds us that he **IS** with us at all times and in all places.

He is here among us today as we gather to celebrate some important aspects of His life. His resurrection and His ascension.

On this Ascension Day, we celebrate Jesus exaltation at the end of his earthly existence and the glory of His ascension to sit at the right hand of His Father in Heaven.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, describes the scene of Jesus ascension when he instructs His Apostles to remain in Jerusalem and await baptism from the Holy Spirit.

In Matthews gospel today the focus of today's feast, is on the heavenly reign of Christ Himself.

The importance of this feast is the completion of Jesus mission on earth and also the mission that He gave his disciples, as we heard in the first reading.

“You will be my witnesses, not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea, and indeed to the ends of the earth”.

In the second reading, Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he exhorts the disciples to live in a manner worthy of their calling & their mission.

Paul explains the theological meaning of Jesus exultation by saying “may God enlighten the eyes of your minds so that we may see the great hope to which we have been called and what rich glories he has promised”

Our great hope is that one day we too will be ascending to heavenly glory, providing that, with His grace, we live out our faith in Him through the mission of loving service he entrusts to us, our mission to preach the good news of salvation to the whole world by word and deed.

The greatest witness we can bear to the presence of Jesus **alive** in our midst is our unity with God, seen in the way we live our lives with one another, in peace and harmony.

Jesus promise and the whole purpose of his death was that he has opened wide for us the entrance to eternal life.

The messages for us today are clear:-

Jesus' command to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth applies, not just to a select few, but to each and everyone of us.

To be a Christian is to be a proclaimer and an evangelist.

As a proclaimer we give witness, essentially by the way we live our lives in the true Christian spirit. To be an evangelist is to courageously take every opportunity to speak out for Jesus and his way.

This is exactly the approach Pope Francis is expounding in what he has labeled “The new Evangelisation”.

If we are courageous enough to accept this challenge the ascended Jesus is our source of strength and encouragement.

Perhaps some of the nagging doubts, which inevitably accompany our journey of faith, could be lessened by meditating on the ascension and all its implications.

When we are too far from faith to pray on our own, remember that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one, praying for us.

When the trials of life seem too heavy to bear, let us remember that Jesus will come again in glory.

We will do well to also remember and celebrate the fact that he is fully present, participating in every moment of our lives.

WE remember that by his death Christ has not deserted us has not made us spiritual orphans, but has made it possible for the Holy Spirit to be an indwelling presence in our lives

and for us to be transformed by his love and so become
enlivened and activated in his service.

And we remember again Jesus last words.

“Know that I am with you always, yes, to the end of time”