

THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.
(Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9; Ephesian 1:17-23; MT 28:16-20).

THE EVIDENCE OF GRACE

(Fr. Michael's Homily)

In His Ascension is Our Access

Today's readings describe the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ into his Heavenly glory. Christ is now seated at God's right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet (Eph. 1:21).

Jesus' ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new and unique way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time (Matthew 28:20). Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Savior, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit who would anoint them with power from on high on the Feast of Pentecost, just as Jesus was anointed for his ministry at the River Jordan (Luke 3:21-22, 4:1,18). When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left in sorrow or grief. Instead, they were filled with joy and with great anticipation for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Today's Feast is a celebration of Jesus' glory after his suffering and death – a glory in which we also hope to share. Matthew's Gospel begins with the promise of Emmanuel – God is with us (Matt. 1:23); it concludes with the promise of the Risen Christ, "I am with you always, even to the end of time" (Matt. 28:20). Christ is now exalted above the heavens, but he still suffers on earth all the pain that we, the members of his body, have to bear. He showed this when he cried out from above: Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? and when he said: I was hungry, and you gave me food. Jesus is present in his word; in the Church at prayer; wherever two or three are gathered in his name; present in the poor, in the sick, in the imprisoned, in the painful pilgrimages of migrants, in the uncertainties of asylum seekers; in the loneliness of the homeless, in the believing and worshipping community, in the person of the ministers, in the sacraments and ultimately, in the sacrifice of the mass. While in heaven he is also with us; and we while on earth are with him. He is here with us by his divinity, his power and his love.

A beautiful old story tells of how Jesus, after his Ascension into Heaven, was surrounded by the angels who began to enquire about his work on earth. Jesus told them about His birth, life, preaching, death and Resurrection, and how he had accomplished the salvation of the world. The Archangel Gabriel asked, "Well, now that you are back in Heaven, who will continue your work on earth?" Jesus said, "While I was on earth, I gathered a group of people around me who believed in me and loved me. They will continue to spread the Gospel and carry on the work of the Church." Gabriel was perplexed. "You mean Peter, who denied you thrice and all the rest who ran away when you were crucified? You mean to tell us that you left them to carry on your work? And what will you do if this plan doesn't work?" Jesus said, "I have no other plan — it must work." Truly, Jesus has no other plan than to depend on the efforts of his followers! Jesus now depends upon you and all believers.

What are we then called to do?

The feast of the Ascension empowers individual Christians and the Church to live and show forth the message of Christ in its fullness. In the first reading we are told: wait for "the promise of the Father...in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." We will receive power at Pentecost, we will receive the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation. We will receive the

inheritance of his riches in glory. We will be enabled through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to participate in the surpassing greatness of his power.

“All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). And this is what Jesus now expects of us:

To become witnesses, evangelizers and proclaimers of the good news. Let us preach the word with our lips and proclaim the good news with our lives. Be witnesses! Be a testimonial to the goodness of God.

To take on our teaching mission: Jesus taught us lessons of Faith, Hope, Love, forgiveness, mercy and salvation. Our mission is to bring them to others in the same ways. Hence, let us learn all Jesus did and taught through daily study of the Bible and the teachings of the Church, experience Jesus in personal prayer, reception of the Sacraments and works of charity, and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, convey to others Jesus whom we have experienced.

To live a life of Christian joy even in our broken and hurting world. Let Jesus be our source of Joy in the world. Nothing else, for Jesus alone is enough!

Prayer

God our Father,
make us joyful in the ascension of your Son Jesus Christ.

May we follow him into the new creation
for his ascension is our glory and our hope.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever
and ever.

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jevdCs6P-ss&feature=youtu.be>