

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord. The Gospel reading of today's Mass tells us the story of Jesus commissioning his disciples, "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 he promised them "behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mathew 28:16-20).

Jesus claimed that full authority had been given to him in heaven and on earth and it is this authority that he shared with his disciples and shares with us today. He commissioned them and commissions us today with his own mission just as his father had commissioned him. We are called and sent to continue and fulfill this mission today.

The Gospel of Mark tells us the story of Jesus taking his disciples to task for their disbelief and their stubbornness since they had not put faith in those who had seen him after he had been raised. Jesus rose from the dead and first appeared to Mary Magdalene, but the followers of Jesus refused to believe her testimony. The disciples did not expect Jesus to be visiting Mary of Magdala after his resurrection. After all, her past was not great, and she was not one of the specially chosen apostles - she did not fit the common criteria for a visit from the world beyond and that was a surprise! Neither did they believe the two disciples, who had an experience of the risen Jesus, while they were on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:9-15).

It is amazing to remember that Jesus called and trusted these men to be his witnesses and sent them with his mission of bringing good news to the world. Men of weak faith, men who could not see beyond their disappointment, men who did not grasp all that Jesus said to them about his death and resurrection while he was among them, were sent to proclaim the good news of the resurrection (Mark 16:15-20). Jesus trusted these men with all their "disbelief, doubts and stubbornness" and sent them with his mission of bringing good news to the world. Surprise!!!

Today, we, with all our limitations and weaknesses are trusted with this good news and called to bring this good news of Jesus to the world. We must be open! The Lord has his own way of surprising us! He comes to us through the most unexpected people, events, places and situations! Remember the burning bush, the gentle breeze, the manger, the cross and the empty tomb... Our Sacred scriptures are full of the surprises of the Lord!

The story of the ascension of the Lord is the story of the Church being called, commissioned, empowered and sent to continue what Jesus began. It is the story of Jesus asking the disciples to become more fully involved. It is the story of the disciples being empowered to live and to share the good news of Jesus. The feast of Ascension calls us to wait and remain open to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and be empowered to continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus.

We must learn to be still and wait patiently, with open arms, minds, and hearts! We must pray that the Holy Spirit fills us with all the gifts we need to fulfill our mission of giving witness to our faith in the risen Jesus.

The meaning of Christ's Ascension,' writes Pope Benedict XVI, 'expresses our belief that in Christ the humanity that we all share has entered into the inner life of God in a new and hitherto unheard-of way. It means that man has found an everlasting place in God.' It would be a mistake to interpret the Ascension as 'the temporary absence of Christ from the world.' Rather, 'we go to heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into him.' Heaven is a person: 'Jesus himself is what we call "heaven."

The story of the Ascension is an amazing story...this is the story of an end and a beginning that was continuous, that merged...an end that ran into a beginning and a beginning that grew out of an end. The ascension of the Lord is the story of "continuity" and not break from what they had come to know and experience. This is the story of the Church being called, sent and empowered to continue what Jesus began. It is the story of Jesus asking the disciples and us today to become more fully involved. It is the story of the disciples being empowered to live and to share the good news of Jesus.

The Acts of the Apostles tell us that the followers of Jesus were of "one mind and one heart" (Acts 2:42-47), that they were together in a common life, in the breaking of bread, in prayer, in listening to the word of God, the instruction of the Apostles and in ministering to the wider community. This is what attracted many to the early Christian community, "Day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:47)."

It is on the fidelity of the believers and their relationship to one another that the Church is built. It is our connection to Jesus, the living corner stone and our concern for one another that creates and sustains the Church. It is the spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit that gathers us, brings us together and holds us together forever!

Let us not wait or hesitate to share and announce the good news of God's love till we have fully matured in faith! If we wait for perfect knowledge and understanding, we may never give witness to our faith. Let us pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will inspire us, move us and empower us to continue to fulfill the mission of Jesus entrusted to the Church.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

The Ascension of the Lord

May 21, 2023

**Life is not just a succession of events or experiences.
It is a search for the true, the good and the beautiful.
It is to this end that we make our choices; it is for this that we exercise our freedom;
it is in this – in truth, in goodness and in beauty – that we find happiness and joy.
(Pope Benedict XVI)**

Collect

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,
which we keep in honor of the risen Lord,
and that what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

**The final judgment is not about how you kept the rules
and how many prayers you said. It is about
how steadfast you have been in showing loving kindness to the needy.**

Acts 1:1-11

Luke tells us that the Holy Spirit empowered the Church to continue where Jesus had left off at his death. Jesus had asked the apostles to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit filled them with courage and strength to proclaim the risen Lord and to live the life which Jesus called them to live.

We will experience courage and strength if we learn to wait, to be still...to wait for being strengthened by the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples asked Jesus, "Are you going to restore the rule to Israel now". They had misunderstood the message of Jesus about the kingdom. They thought in terms of an earthly reality, in political terms. Jesus had to change their concepts.

This excerpt from Acts tells us that his disciples needed the Holy Spirit to teach them and empower them to carry on his mission. Jesus trusted the disciples with his mission and empowered them to continue and fulfill his mission.

Today, it is up to us to continue the mission of Jesus in and through the Holy Spirit. Rejoice in being trusted with the mission of Jesus and be faithful.

Psalm 47

Psalm 47 was probably composed for the ascend of the king to his throne. Hence the use of this psalm for the feast of Ascension. It must have been part of a colorful and dramatic celebration. The choirmaster or master of ceremonies invites the assembly to rejoice, "clap your hands. Shout to God... God reigns over the nations.....kings of the nations belong to God, he is to be greatly exalted!

As the human king ascended to his throne, the assembly sang the praises of God because it is God who brought them to the Promised Land. The human king is only "God's silly vassal" as Andrew Melville told King James. However, the human king is the Lord's anointed! So his ascend on earth dramatized on earth the ascend of God to his throne. So the assembly shouted, "The Lord is King" of all nations and people!

**All you peoples, clap your hands,
Shout to God with cries of gladness.
For the lord, the most high, the awesome,
is the great king over all the earth.**

Ephesians 1:17-23

The author of this letter has a prayer for us that we may enjoy the knowledge of God here and now, that we may be empowered with Holy Spirit, that we may be enlightened, that we may know God as God is, that we may be blessed with wisdom and understanding...

Make this passage from Ephesians your prayer for the week.

Mathew 28:16-20

Mathew tells us that the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain just as Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped with doubts and fears.

Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. In this passage that Jesus commissioned his disciples to go forth in the power of God their Father, in the name of the Son their redeemer and inflamed by the love of the Spirit to share with the world what they had experienced and to Baptize, to immerse the world into the mystery God's life and love.

Jesus claimed that full authority had been given to him in heaven and earth and it is this authority that he shared with his disciples. He commissioned them with his own mission just as his father had commissioned him. We are called to continue and fulfill this mission today.

It is amazing to remember that Jesus called and trusted his men to be his witnesses and sent them with his mission of bringing good news to the world. Today, we, with all our limitations and inconsistencies are trusted with this good news and called to bring this good news of Jesus to the world.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments

Saint of the Day, May 21 - St. Eugene de Mazenod and 30 other saints are remembered this day.

Eugene de Mazenod was born on August 1, 1782 in Aix-en-Provence, France. Because of the French revolution, the family was forced to flee to Italy. In spite of the upheaval of the French Revolution, he entered the seminary, and was ordained a priest at Amiens in 1811. Soon after his ordination, he organized missionaries to go to rural parts of Provence, instructing the people whose religious training had been disrupted for many years by the French Revolution and its aftermath. Eugene directed his ministry toward the poorest of the poor. Others joined his labors, and became the nucleus of a religious community, the Missionaries of Provence.

Eugene began the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1816, obtaining papal approval for them 10 years later. From rural preaching, they soon moved into running seminaries to improve the quality of the clergy. Their first foreign mission was in Canada in 1841; soon they were in Africa, Asia, Australia, and Latin America.

Eugene became Bishop of Marseille, following his uncle. There he built churches, founded parishes, cared for his priests, and developed catechetics for the young. After a life dedicated to spreading the Good News, Eugene died on May 21, 1861 and was canonized in 1998.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**Be open to the gift of tomorrow.
Tomorrow is a gift that is not yet unwrapped!**