

Ascension  
June 2, 2019  
“Gone, but Still Present”

Acts 1:1-11  
Eph 1:17-23  
Lk 24:46-53

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The loss of a loved one is always painful. That loss is intensified if their death is totally unexpected. That loss is further compounded if it is that of a child. For, normally, children are supposed to outlive their parents.

Part of the pain of loss is the separation from someone whom we love dearly. They are not only gone – but gone completely except in our memory. Their death also leaves a great hole in our lives and hearts that no other person or other thing can adequately fill! For even though we carry on and fill our lives with other people and things, no one can ever truly fill the particular space and place our loved one occupied.

This is what the disciples of Jesus experienced and understood after the death of Jesus on Good Friday. However, on Easter Sunday, their lives were turned upside down again with the Resurrection of Jesus. Unbelievably, Jesus was again with them – but in a different way – and only temporarily. During that time he appeared to them on many different occasions and at different locales. He ate with them, spoke to them, and continued to teach them.

Nevertheless, with the Ascension, Jesus was taken from them once again. But things were different this time. Jesus was not dead, but he went to abide in another realm. He returned to the presence of his Father from which he originally came. He was fully alive, as never before. In comparison, it was if one of our loved ones went on a journey – or had to re-locate to a distant place beyond our reach. Although, physically, not with us – they are still very much alive and part of our lives!

In a different Gospel passage from St. Matthew, Jesus said that he would be with us until the end of time. (Matthew 28:20) And, truly, he continues to be with us in so many ways. He is there in the words of the Gospels and in the 7 sacraments, especially

the Eucharist – He is there whenever 2 or 3 of us gather in his name as disciples – He is present in the depths of our souls and spirits, through the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us. However, it requires us to prepare for that in-dwelling Spirit and to be receptive of it.

This is why the disciples were told more than once after the Resurrection to preach repentance and conversion from sin. And this is why the Church continues to mention change of heart and soul again and again throughout the year.

Thus, conversion is an on-going process – Because with each change comes a new perspective or awareness. And with these, we are able to see more areas of our lives to change and to turn over to God!

One of the very human inadequacies we all have is not to be able to understand all that a loved one says or does while they are with us. Often, it is only after they are gone, and we have time to reflect, that we discover the meaning behind what they were trying to say. When this does happen, we are enlightened – and in some ways we feel closer to them than ever before!

This is what the disciples would experience after Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. That Spirit would reveal so many things, and uncover so much of what, before, was shrouded in mystery! Some of these insights are contained in today's second reading from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians!

However, the disciples would have to be patient. They would have to remain in Jerusalem despite danger from the Jewish leadership – despite uncertainty over the future – despite understanding so little – or what God would, ultimately, ask of them!

Brothers and Sisters, it's always difficult when our loved ones are taken from us with death. However, that separation is not forever. They have journeyed into another realm. They are with Jesus and the Father. They wait for us on the other side. And they can pray to God for us and on our behalf.

So let us pray for more spiritual awareness – Let us also pray that we continue to open ourselves to Jesus and to what the Holy Spirit will reveal to us each remaining day of our life here!

Amen.

June 2, 2019

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