

*That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.*

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This past Thursday we celebrated the glorious Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, taking His human flesh into heaven and uniting it to the majesty of God. It was not an illusion, the disciples had gone with Jesus to the village of Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, one of Jesus' favorite places. And there on the mountain that provides one of the best views of Jerusalem, Jesus, in the sight of His disciples and perhaps all of Jerusalem, promised to them the coming of the Holy Ghost, and then *he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.*

The scriptures reveal to us that this was a glorious event to behold. The Disciples are dumbfounded with amazement at watching Jesus ascend into heaven. They are speechless, and suddenly there are two men in white apparel, two angels, who say to the Disciples not just what is on everyone's minds, that they are indeed watching Jesus go up into heaven, but that he will return in like manner. Luke's Gospel account ends with a verse about the Ascension and that the Disciples *returned to Jerusalem with great joy.* Yet we might wonder, what went through the Disciple's minds in those moments between *the cloud received Him out of their sight,* and *behold, two men stood by them in white apparel?* We know that the Disciple's love for Jesus was great, perhaps even hard for us to understand. They said to one another on the road to Emmaus, *did not our hearts burn within us while he walked and talked with us?* And when the disciples are fishing and see the risen Lord walking on the shore, St. Peter cannot wait for the boat to be brought to shore but jumps out of the boat and swims to shore!

The glory of the Ascension must have been tinged with sadness as the cloud received Him out of their sight. Mary Magdalene who had come early Easter Morning to the tomb to weep, must have wept again. The Blessed Virgin Mary is separated from her beloved Son yet again. Jesus had promised them He would not leave them comfortless, but that He would send the Comforter to them, *tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* They would wait in Jerusalem for eight long days. Probably the longest they had been separated from Jesus in three years. Finally on the eighth day, as we shall celebrate this coming Sunday, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter descends upon each of the Disciples

filling them, that He may evermore dwell in them and they in Him. And Jesus was nearer and closer to them than He had ever been when He walked with them on this earth.

Now we who would strive to be Jesus' disciples, walk in the Easter Light of Christ, and have been filled with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter through the waters of Baptism and the Chrism of Confirmation. And even though through the Holy Spirit Jesus is evermore dwelling in us and we in Him, still it seems that occasionally *a cloud [receives] Him out of our sight*, and we gaze up into heaven feeling as far away from God as the earth is from the sun. And even though we may find this upsetting and worrisome, yet it is a part of the Christian life. We experience this in a way every Sunday at Mass, for a moment Jesus is with us especially present through Holy Communion, but only for a moment, and after we have received Him, He is taken from our sight. What do we do when it seems a cloud has taken the Lord out of our sight? We may take the Disciples as our example and *continue steadfastly in prayer and supplication*. We should take Jesus at His word, He says in the Gospel of John, *it is expedient for you that I go away*. In a way, it is much like raising children. God occasionally seems to leave us on our own, He does not intend for us to stay His little children forever, just as we parents expect our children to grow in responsibility and maturity.

But just as every Sunday at Mass we come face to face with the Lord through Holy Communion, and He is taken from our sight when we receive Holy Communion, when we receive Him in Holy Communion, He is within us, and closer to us than if we had the privilege of walking and talking with Jesus as the Disciples did. Let us take heart, because even when Jesus seems to be removed from us He is closer to us than we can imagine. Blessed John Keble writes, *Our savior's exaltation ought in all reason to lift us, heart and soul on high after Him...for He has overcome our spiritual enemies...He has gone into heaven, the first fruits of a whole harvest to be redeemed and by that glorious ascension we know something of what is prepared for those who try to ascend thither in heart and mind. We know that nothing possibly can be too high or too glorious for faithful Christians to hope for, seeing that He who is their pattern and example is raised to the right hand of the Almighty Father*.

Jesus has ascended into heaven and the Holy Spirit has descended on us. The Holy Spirit has drawn us here this morning to Mass. That here with the rest of our local Body of Christ we may ascend to heaven and receive another movement of God's Grace from the Holy Spirit through Jesus' own body and blood. This is the act of perfect love which casts out all fear. We are invited to bring to Christ our fears

and anxieties and receive Him in return. We are invited to leave our fears and anxieties, our sins, to leave it all behind and ascend with Jesus. This is the message of the Ascension and God's design for our lives. As the writer to the Hebrews reminds us, *seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Amen.*