

[Readings: Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Ephesians 1:17-23 or 4:1-13 Mark 16:15-20]

This is truly a time of transition. In the Archdiocese, announcements are being made of pastors changing parishes and newer priests receiving their associate pastor assignments. (Don't worry... I'm not going anywhere! I won't fool you on Ascension Sunday like I did on Easter Sunday!) Graduation on the elementary, high school and college levels are taking place, with celebration and sharing memories of years gone by. It is also the season for weddings and priesthood ordinations, and First Communions and Confirmations.

Today's Feast of the Ascension is very much like that. Traditionally, we are told that forty days lapsed between the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and His return to the Father in glory. That's why Ascension was celebrated on a Thursday. But for the convenience of working Catholics and the chance to give this feast day the prominence it deserves, it has been moved in most dioceses of our country from Thursday to the Seventh Sunday of Easter.

And what a time of transition this has been for the disciples of Jesus! He is taken up into Heaven. His successor, the First Pope, is a shadow of their former leader. So tentative are the Apostles, so frightened still, that they are coached by Jesus to "stay in Jerusalem" and remain there for nine days until the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, the Consoler, the Helper, will come to them. This is the first recorded "novena" or 9-day prayer in the Catholic Church!

We've had quite a few funerals here recently. And the common thread that I have seen among all of them is the time for gathering, for remembering, for praying, for grieving, and then for picking ourselves up to continue the Journey of Faith. There is a different spirit when a loved one dies, one that might make us uncomfortable. Because now we are without the comfort of them being with us. After the passing of St. Pope John Paul II, his personal secretary, now Cardinal Stanislaw Dziwisz, was asked, "How are we going to live without him? How is the Church going to survive without him?" Cardinal Dziwisz didn't have to pause long to answer. He said: "Before his death he was greatly limited by the confines

of his body and his health.

Now he can go anywhere around the world and help us a thousand times more effectively than he did in his body!" So can Jesus Christ!

We also see in our three readings the continuity of the arrival of Jesus, the miracles He worked, the message he preached, and the commission of those who knew Him personally and those who would come to know Him after His ascension to the Father. The Good News of the Gospel is that the story doesn't end with Jesus returning to Heaven. That's Part II of a three-part story. You and I make up Part III. "All that Jesus did and taught" now becomes all that you and I must do and teach in order for the Kingdom of God to come to earth, and to remain here until Jesus returns for His Great Curtain Call at the end of time.

What holds us back? Negativity? Fear? Just as Jesus experienced opposition, resistance, misunderstanding and rejection, Jesus promises to continually accompany anyone who responds in faith, trust and abandonment. Jesus may have left us in time and space, but He never leaves our human experience. He lives and works with us here, through the promised Holy Spirit, Whose presence and gift among us we will celebrate next weekend.

Our readings today also remind that us that what goes up must come down! The life of Jesus Christ on this earth had its ups and downs: Down from Heaven in the Incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas. Up on the cross for our salvation on Good Friday. Down in the tomb and to the souls of all humans who died before Him. Up from the tomb on Easter Sunday. Down to earth in the Upper Room. Back up into Heaven on this Feast of the Ascension. He still comes down to us, every time we invite Him here in word and sacrament and in the events of our daily lives. His Last Great Coming Down is yet to be.

In the meantime, we still call upon Him. We still accept the mission to go out to the entire world and proclaim the Good News. We pray in the words of St. Paul: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give us a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in the full and lasting knowledge of Him. May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened, that we may know what is the hope that

belongs to His call, our inheritance and the glory of His power.

May we live in a manner worthy of the call we have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another, and preserving unity with the bond of love and peace.

On this Mother's Day, I share with you a "Reflection of a Mother." You will find a copy of it in today's bulletin. I can imagine my Mom saying this to me, but also I can imagine Jesus saying some of these line to this to His Apostles before ascending to the Father in Heaven. It is by an unknown author:

I gave you life, but cannot live it for you.

I can teach you things, but I cannot make you learn.

I can give you directions, but I cannot be there to lead you.

I can allow you freedom, but I cannot account for it.

I can take you to church, but I cannot make you believe.

I can teach you right from wrong, but I cannot always decide for you.

I can buy you beautiful clothes, but I cannot make you beautiful inside.

I can offer you advice, but I cannot accept it for you.

I can give you love, but I cannot force it upon you.

I can teach you to share, but I cannot make you unselfish.

I can teach you respect, but I cannot force you to show honor.

I can advise you about friends, but cannot choose them for you.

I can advise you about sex, but I cannot keep you pure.

I can tell you the facts of life, but I can't build your reputation.

I can tell you about drink, but I can't say "no" for you.

I can warn you about drugs, but I can't prevent you from using them.

I can tell you about lofty goals, but I can't achieve them for you.

I can teach you about kindness, but I can't force you to be gracious.

I can warn you about sins, but I cannot make you moral.

I can love you as a child, but I cannot place you in God's family.

I can pray for you, but I cannot make you walk with God.

I can teach you about Jesus, but I cannot make Jesus your Lord.

I can tell you how to live, but I cannot give you eternal life.

I can love you with unconditional love all of my life...and I will!

Ascension B (Mother's Day)

SMdP

13 May 18

ALLELUIA and AMEN!