

The Ascension of Our Lord
May 16, 2021
“Waiting for Better Times”

Acts 1:1-11
Eph 4:1...13
Mk 16:15-29

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We certainly live in troubled times. Our world is in disarray – Our nation is divided and polarized on many different levels – Our Church is wounded and challenged by false teaching and false morality.

The world has always had problems. But our times seem worse because so many of the problems are universal. They are more intense than anyone ever thought possible. If we are not careful, we could unleash a chaos and a destruction from which we might never recover.

Many of the faithful wonder just how long God will permit evil to wreak its havoc. Others believe that the visions of some of the modern mystics will be fulfilled soon. “There will be some kind of universal sign and warning” – “There will be a universal darkness for three days” – “There will be a worldwide purge!” And the afterwards could be very difficult indeed!

The disciples of Jesus were certain that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah who would solve all their problems and make life easier for the Chosen People. He would, somehow, remove Roman control and domination. Israel would, again, be an autonomous nation. People would treat each other with kindness and respect.

But then Jesus was executed – only, somehow, to rise on the third day! They were both astounded and confused by it all. Now they felt certain that all that they had expected of a Messiah would finally come to pass. Yet, how wrong they were!

The physical presence of Jesus would be taken from them. The Risen Christ had to return to God the Father. And when asked about Israel’s restoration, Jesus didn’t answer the question. Instead, he told them that they could never know what lay ahead with any certainty. Only God knew.

However, the disciples were given a charge – a new responsibility – a mission. They were to proclaim Jesus and his message to the whole world. Furthermore, people would be saved or condemned dependent upon their acceptance or non-acceptance – their belief or non-belief – in Jesus and his Gospel!

Nevertheless, despite all that Jesus said and taught, they still could not comprehend or understand. They could not put it all together. They needed a special gift of enlightenment. So Jesus told them to stay together and wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit. For then, everything would fall into place.

So wait they did. They had to be patient. They couldn't hurry things along. Neither could they be anxious or fretful. Instead, they had to believe and trust and pray. God's plan and purpose would unfold in God's own good time and in His divine way. Moreover, they would have much to do in the fulfillment of that plan.

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are all called to help in the fulfillment of God's plan. We, too, are disciples. And each of us in our own unique way, must make the mission of Jesus, his Gospel, and his words – believable. We do this in very ordinary ways in all that we do – especially in our attitude and in our behavior toward others.

St. Paul outlined this for us while he was waiting trial or execution in Rome. In today's second reading he says: "We must live in the manner worthy of the call we have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace." Because each of us has been given grace and gifts according to the measure of Christ's gift to us!

Brothers and Sisters, the only way the world can change and survive is if each of us becomes changed. Each of us must be kind and caring toward everyone we encounter as well as with everyone in our personal lives. Yes, this might seem impossible. Yes, the judgment of God might be coming – and coming soon. When this will take place, we cannot know.

However, we can survive our present broken world, our divided nation, and our wounded Church. We can do this if we are faithful to all that God asks of us in each moment – and with every person we meet. We can even face whatever darkness and retribution might come!

So, let us pray, that like the disciples, we are patient. Let us wait for the Holy Spirit – And may we be open to the way the Spirit comes everyday – and at those special times in our lives as well.

Amen.

May 16, 2021

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