

Commentary on the Readings for May 29, 2022

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Because the diocese of Sacramento (and most dioceses in the United States) has transferred the Feast of the **Ascension** from what used to be called **Holy Thursday** to the 7th Sunday of the Easter Season, the readings will be taken from the Feast rather than from the 7th Sunday. The Ascension marks the end of Jesus' human life on earth but not His involvement in the lives of mankind, which He directs through His Holy Spirit and the Church. Thereafter, Jesus "sits at the right hand of the Father from where He shall come to judge the living and the dead."

In the **First Reading**, from ***the Acts of the Apostles (1:1-11)***, St. Luke, the author, describes the last forty days of the risen Christ on earth, teaching and preparing the apostles for His departure. In addition to the event of the Ascension itself, the promise of the Holy Spirit is something we should focus on because the Holy Spirit will now be given to all the baptized. It is through the Holy Spirit that God's **Plan of Salvation** will continue to unfold until the end of time.

The **Responsorial Psalm (47:2-9)**, is a song that the angels and saints in heaven might have sung upon welcoming the risen and glorified Christ back into heaven after fulfilling His mission on earth. We also will be welcomed in the same way if we complete our mission, our role, in God's Plan of Salvation. This is not just a nice pious thought or assumption, but a reality that we should all be concerned with.

The **Second Reading** is taken from ***Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (1:17-23)***. If you read this passage from Paul's great Letter to the Ephesians immediately after the Responsorial Psalm, you might think it was a continuation of the psalm, except that it applies to mankind here on earth. Paul prays that the "***eyes of our heart be enlightened***" to grasp and understand the importance of the return of Jesus back to heaven, and the power and authority that is given to Him. In addition, God puts all things at the feet of Jesus in heaven and makes Him "***the head over all things in every way.***" This should give us the motivation to spend some serious time in pondering this great event.

The **Gospel Reading** is from the ***Gospel of Luke (24:46-53)***. Immediately before the actual event of the Ascension, Jesus gives all Christians a message. No, more than a message, it is a commission, a command that is often lost on us who just read this passage without letting it sink in. He is "***sending the promise of the Father upon you (meaning us, today's disciples)***" to go out and share the "Good News" that Jesus Christ is risen and has returned to His throne in Heaven. It isn't enough to be joyful over the event of the Ascension (or sad in some cases), but it should motivate us to see the importance of the event which proves the authority and teachings of Christ and His pivotal role in God's Plan of Salvation.

We should spend a fair amount of time in meditating on the Ascension of Christ. It is not a time to be sad. Some people might ask: "If He was God, why couldn't He stay with us forever?" Two reasons come immediately to mind: (a) Jesus as man was subject to all the limitations that all human beings have, including life span; but more importantly, (b) as He tells the apostles in the Gospel of John (16:7ff), "***It is better for you that I go*** [back to the Father in heaven]. ***If I fail to go, the Holy Spirit will not come to***

you.” Thus, Jesus continues to guide us and the Church through the Holy Spirit. Something to think about during your prayer time this week! **MFB**