

Pastoral Reflection: Ascension Sunday (Mark 16, 15-20)

Our Task, After Ascension

After Jesus had vanished from the sight of His disciples, the angels told them, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?" In effect, the angels were telling them that instead of just staring at the sky doing nothing, they were to do as Jesus had instructed them -- to go to Jerusalem and "wait for the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak." Jesus was referring to the gift of His Spirit whom they would receive a few days later.

With this, we must realize that even if Jesus is no longer physically present among us just as He was no longer present with His disciples after His Ascension, He has not abandoned us. With the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost -- Jesus' own Spirit -- He is and will always be present among us.

Moreover, being seated on the right hand of God and with everything placed at His disposal by the Father, Jesus is now in the best position to continue His saving work in and among us. After all the Father has placed everything at His disposal.

Finally, since His Spirit is now with us and in the world, we live not only with hope but also with strength. Thus we must stand confident that with Him we can live according to the teachings and deeds of Jesus and build His Kingdom on earth.

What is the significance of all the preceding to our faith-life? Both as individuals and as members of the community of believers, we are tasked with what He had commissioned the apostles to do: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mk. 16:15-16.) In short, we must use our light of faith to overcome darkness and not hide it under a bushel basket.

The Ascension of Jesus has thus imposed a great responsibility on us as individuals and as members of a community. Jesus wants us to carry on from where He left off. If His Ascension was a mission-sending for His disciples, it is also for us. He does not only want us to be His witnesses through our words and deeds but also to proclaim the Good News to others, "to all creation," so that they too will accept the "good news" and find their happiness in God and in the things of God.

A great task indeed. But for most of us, we do not have to go far in carrying this out. We can start right where God has placed us -- in our home, our school, our work-place, our parish, the wider community, etc. And Jesus will always be with us in His Spirit as we carry out our divinely appointed tasks.

On the occasion of this wonderful feast then, let us thank God that Jesus, though now seated at His right hand, is also present among us through His Spirit and thus is able to help us live in the way He wants us to live. Finally, let us ask Jesus, Lord of heaven and earth, to give us the courage and strength to make known His message to one and all so that they too will be gifted with the faith that saves.