

The solemnity of Ascension of the Lord

A guy goes ice fishing for the very first time. All of a sudden, he hears a voice. "There are no fish under the ice!" he ignores it and moves to another area, cuts a hole, and tosses his line in. Again he hears the booming voice: "There are no fish under the ice!" He nervously looks up and asks, "Lord? Is that you?" "No, this is the rink manager!"

Dear Friends,

Today we remember the Solemnity of Ascension of the Lord. Christians celebrate this after forty days of Easter. Forty is symbolic often representing a period of transition from one state to another.

To understand the ascension better in our realistic world, it is like a going away party. We are all in the middle of graduations. When our kids go out of our house after graduation, there is a piece of joy and happiness, at the same time feeling of missing them at our house. Ascension can be called bittersweet. My parents had the same feeling when I left to come to the United States, even though I see them now and then over the phone and talk to them periodically.

The readings today help us understand the mission Jesus left for the apostles and us. The first reading explains how Jesus ascended into heaven and the apostles were commissioned to be his witnesses starting from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

The gospel, Jesus gave his disciples a mission of bearing witness to him by preaching and living the Good News. They are to tell and re-tell the story of Jesus' life, suffering, death and Resurrection, Ascension, and sending of the Holy Spirit. (b) He assured them of the Divine assistance of the Holy Spirit in the carrying out of this mission.

St. Augustine proclaimed these words on the Feast: "Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him. Listen to the words of the Apostle: 'If you have risen with Christ, set your hearts on the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.' For just as he remained with us even after his Ascension, so we too are already in Heaven with him, even though what is promised us has not yet been fulfilled in our bodies."

Jesus asks us to retell the stories in two ways. 1) by preaching and teaching: as we learn our faith, we are obligated to teach to the next generation. By telling our stories, our connection to the Lord is a good way to preach to the next generation. Most of the times

we try to share the things that were not likely. We need to share the positive experience that we had.

II) Secondly, we need to be a living witness to our family. This quote is from Mother Theresa, "Don't search for Jesus in far lands- he is not there. He is close to you; he is with you. Just keep the lamp burning and you will always see him. Keep on filling the lamp with all these little drops of love, and you will see how sweet the Lord you love".

Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium", says: "All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the Faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. Indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love."