

Whenever we celebrate the feast of our Lord's Ascension to heaven, I am reminded of one of my holy aunts...Lucy Doyle. She was a prayerful lady and later in life entered a nursing home. When I'd visit her, our visits would usually end with me saying, "See you when I get back again." Her response was always the same. With a calm voice she would say, "I hope not." I would usually ask her, "Why, where are you going?" She always gave the same answer. Pointing towards heaven, she would say, "I am going home."

Lucy never showed any fear or doubt about death. Heaven seemed to be on her mind a lot. She looked forward to her death 'cuz it was the steppingstone from this world to be with God.

Our feast today reminds us that there's more to life than this world. Actually, there is a fuller life that is coming. Our scripture readings invite us to consider the final scene of Jesus saying good-bye to his disciples and leaving them with the memory of His words and actions. As the disciples stand looking up to heaven, two angels shake them from their trance and remind them that Jesus will come back again...in the meantime they are to carry on Jesus' work. Don't be afraid. Go forth and be my witnesses to the world.

As we celebrate the completion of Jesus' life here on earth, it's a chance to ask ourselves some basic questions. Do we really believe in God? Sadly, there are a growing number of people that have no sense of God in their life. Can we exist without Him? Again, in our secular society many people take pride in their independence...not being accountable to anyone...let alone God. Do we believe that Jesus suffered, died, and rose from the dead to save us from our sins? Once more there are lots of people who have no sense of sin in their life and that there are consequences to their sins. And do we believe in heaven? Regrettably, our society is full of people who have no sense of life after death. As far as they're concerned when we die, it's over.

It's not difficult to imagine that our Lord would ask all of us those questions. And at the end, if we answered those questions correctly, He would say "all that I did for the past three years (especially the suffering and crucifixion), it was worth it. And I'd do it over again if I had to. Now, go into the world and spread this good news. God loves us so much that He can't wait for us to share eternity with Him.

There's a story of a devout, old fisherman who lived alone and, when he was able, walked ten miles to Church on Sunday. One Sunday there was a terrible storm and the old man arrived at Church very late. In fact, he was so late that all he heard was the final words of the priest's blessing: "Now and forevermore". His friends tried to console him and tell him how sorry they were that he had been disappointed after his difficult ten-mile walk. He replied, "Disappointed? Never! It is worth walking twenty miles just to hear those three words: NOW AND FOREVERMORE."

Fr. Jim Leary