

The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11; Ps. 47; Eph. 1: 17-23; Mk. 16: 15-20

Imagine the scene in a movie. Jesus is standing in the midst of His apostles. All of a sudden, He is taken up on a cloud and rises into the sky accompanied by the blaring of trumpets and the apostles are left gasping and screaming in shock and awe. Just imagine the sound effects and the bright lights as Jesus ascends to heaven!

The apostles stood with their mouths hanging open gazing up into the sky long after Jesus had disappeared from view. Not only were they awe-struck by what had just happened, but they were likely saddened as well. They had been with Him for three years, learning from Him and witnessing His miracles. They must have been sad and a little frightened to see Him go.

Especially in the days following His resurrection, Jesus had appeared to them and instructed them more intensely as to the mission He was entrusting to them when He departed from the world. Even though He had given them numerous warnings that He would soon be leaving the world, at the moment of the event, the apostles were probably scared at the thought of carrying on the mission without Jesus' leadership.

Perhaps we have felt similar feelings at the loss of a teacher or mentor. Maybe when we graduated from elementary school to high school or from high school to post-secondary school, we may have felt apprehensive not only because we were leaving a place where we felt secure but also because we were leaving certain teachers that had had such an impact on us. How could we succeed at the higher level without them? Or maybe, early in our working careers, a senior employee retired or left the company and we felt lost without his/her guidance and advice.

But, later on, looking back, we realize that we would not have developed our skills and grown personally if these teachers and mentors did not leave us. If they had stayed with us, we would have relied too heavily on their guidance and not thought for ourselves.

Jesus had to leave this world for many reasons. He had to fulfill His mission on earth and return to His Father. He had to go to heaven to prepare a place for us to give us hope for our future in eternity. And He had to leave to allow us to carry on the mission of love that He had started.

The apostles stood and gazed up to follow Jesus' ascent. This is a sign that we should keep our eyes firmly fixed on the things of heaven and not be focused on the things of earth. But when the angels appeared to the apostles as they gawked, they asked: 'Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?' The message was clear: yes, we should have our hearts and minds focused on the things of heaven but also we should not lose sight of our mission on earth. There is much work to be done.

We have been given the task of being icons of Christ to everyone we meet. This may seem like a daunting mission but Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to abide in us to guide, strengthen, comfort, and console us as we go about this work. Also, Jesus has not left us. He repeats His teachings through the Holy Scriptures. And we are able to encounter Him in the Holy Eucharist and the other Sacraments so we should not feel that we have been left alone to fend for ourselves. Jesus will always be with us. He will never leave us alone.