

TODAY IS THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD
IT IS ALSO A MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

The ascension of Jesus is the climax of his victory over sin and death. It is a day of joy and hope. Jesus wants us to share in his victory. In today's Gospel message, on this Ascension Sunday we are reminded that Jesus now depends on us. We are his witnesses before the world. It's a daunting task but a great privilege too.

The leaving of a dear one is a painful thing because we become conscious of his or her absence, and of our own emptiness and loneliness. But this pain has to be faced. Jesus honored his apostles (and now honors us) by entrusting them with the task of carrying on his mission. **That task was first of all one of preaching.** They were to tell the Good News to all those who had never heard it.

Secondly, the task was one of healing. Christianity is concerned not just with the soul but also with health of mind and body to people. The only assurance he gave them was that he would be with them always: **'I'll be with you always; yes, to the end of time.'** However, that assurance would give them the courage and strength to face whatever difficulties lay ahead. The idea that they could drink a poisoned drink or pick up a dangerous snake and come to no harm (which we hear in the Gospel of Mark) must not be taken literally. These are symbols of evil, and Jesus was saying that his power would enable them to triumph over evil.

As we all go through these difficult times of the Corona virus we can recall that promise of Jesus, and be assured that in spite of these dark days that we are all experiencing, He will triumph over this with us. A sense of the presence of Christ with us doesn't change the world for us, but it can give us the courage to face it. God's closeness shields us against a sense of abandonment and despair.

Notice in today's gospel, Matthew doesn't even mention the ascension. He wants us not so much to focus on where Jesus went but to focus on what Jesus wants us to do now. St. Luke gives us the same message when the angel asks the disciples, "Why are you standing there looking at the sky?" In other words it's time to get to work.

Matthew tells us the apostles would go forth with the Authority of Jesus; they were to go to all the nations; their ministry would be sacramental (they would baptize) and it would be a ministry of teaching people to observe all that I have commanded you. Notice the use of the word "all." "All authority," "all nations," "all that I command," "all days." The mission of the Church (which is our mission today) has no limit.

The apparition of Jesus described in the Acts of the Apostles (our first reading today); The apostles were encouraged to get busy proclaiming the gospel and converting the world and not to just stand there staring Jesus into the sky. So where does this leave us? Shall we just sit around waiting for Jesus to come back? St. Leo the Great tells us *"Christ's Ascension is our own ascension; our body has the hope of one day being where its glorious Head has preceded it."*

In fact, Jesus had said at the Last Supper: (in **John 14:2 &3**) *"...in my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be."*

What should the ascension mean for us: it is a feast that reminds us of the eternal life we are called to.

Once more, today's feast of the Ascension is your feast, a preparation for the gift of the Holy Spirit to you and me. **It is a kind of handing on of the baton.**

It is a feast to remind us of our dignity, our calling, our power, our mandate, and our duty. Together—in service to each other—we are all reminded today that together as Church we are to profess what we believe and live what we profess.

On this Memorial Day weekend, There are three Memories to remember.

1. First, we need to remember that Jesus is here Present with us all our days.
2. Second, We must bless and remember those who have made a difference in the lives of others.
3. Thirdly and finally; we remember those who have died in the service of this country, so that we might live.

To forget to remember any or all of these is to die spiritually. To remember these things is to live –as disciples, as a people, as a nation. AMEN