

## **Ascension of The Lord-A**

Jesus was, in his very person, the meeting of heaven and earth. Divinity and humanity came together in Him. Therefore His entire ministry was the outward expression of that inward identity. His whole life was the work of bringing divinity and humanity together.

He called a scattered Israel to unity. He invited the poor to table fellowship. He healed the sick in body, mind, and spirit. He embodied the path of forgiveness and love. Everything He said and did was Jesus bringing God's will and purpose to earth and bringing earth to God.

We pray "thy kingdom come, they will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This one line from the Lord's Prayer sums up what I have been describing.

In his passion and death, Jesus effectively brought heaven all the way down. He carried the divine life and light precisely into the very darkest places of the human condition: into hatred, into cruelty, into violence, corruption, stupidity, suffering and into death itself. And He thereby transformed them. This is the deepest purpose the incarnation. Heaven and earth coming together; even the darkest aspects of earth have become suffused with the divine light.

What proves that the divine light shines in the darkness; what proves that heaven is indeed able to transform the earth is, of course, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. In light of that great event, we know the cruelty, hatred, violence, suffering and death are not the most powerful forces in the world.

Now we know that the Divine Love is infinitely more powerful. God's kingdom has broken the kingdoms of the world, which thrive upon and therefore produce those very negativities.

The good news of the gospel is that God, in Christ, is King, King of heaven and earth—indeed King of the whole universe.

With all this in mind, we focus on this feast of the Ascension of the Lord. This is the culmination and completion of the Easter Season and the Easter Event for the Church. Jesus is raised up into a full participation in the life of God. He has completed his mission and has opened the way for us, and has commissioned us to carry on the mission to the whole world.

Jesus' departure and ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time. He assured them of his power - a power which overcame sin and death. Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Savior, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to give them the power of his Holy Spirit, which we see fulfilled next Sunday on the Feast of Pentecost

(Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:1-4). When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left alone or powerless. Jesus assured them of his presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' last words to his apostles point to his saving mission and to their mission to be witnesses of his saving death and his glorious resurrection and to proclaim the good news of salvation to the entire world. Their task is to proclaim the gospel - the good news of salvation - not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations as well. God's love and gift of salvation is not reserved for a few or for one nation alone, but it is for the whole world - for all who will accept it. The gospel is the power of God, the power to release people from their burden of guilt, sin, and oppression, and the power to heal, restore, and make us whole. Do you believe in the power of the gospel?

This is the great commission which the risen Christ gives to the whole church. All believers have been given a share in this task - to be heralds of the good news and ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the only savior of the world. We have not been left alone in this task, for the risen Lord works in and through us by the power of his Holy Spirit. Today we witness a new Pentecost as the Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people to renew and strengthen the body of Christ and to equip it for effective apostolates and mission world-wide. Do you witness to others the joy of the gospel and the hope of the resurrection?

"Lord Jesus, through the gift of your Holy Spirit, you fill us with an indomitable spirit of praise and joy which no earthly trial can subdue. Fill us with your resurrection joy and help us to live a life of praise and thanksgiving for your glory. May we witness to those around us the joy of the gospel and the reality of your resurrection."

- Fr. David M. Chiantella