

On the surface, the Ascension of our Lord seems to present us with challenges, however, in reality, it presents us with many opportunities.

Just imagine, for a moment that we are witnesses to this incredible event. A mere 40 days ago, Jesus rose from the dead, and now, he is preparing to return to the Father.

He has spent time with us, taught us, fed us, graced us with his glorified presence. He has brought us HOPE in his promises and the timeless promises of the Father.

Can you hear the disciples exclaim: “How can this be? He just came back to us and now he wants to leave?. How are we going to do as he asks without him here to show us?”

We can ask these same questions today. How are we supposed to go out and proclaim the good news to our world? Who's going to listen to us? How are we to heal the sick or cast out demons?

First, we must realize that the Ascension is not about his absence, but rather it's about his presence in us.

How is the Ascension of our Lord significant today? Through faith we know that his rising points to his destination and his union in heaven with the Father. This is incredible news for us because his resurrected human nature is brought to the throne of God.

This is our great hope, that we, in our humanity will be welcomed by the Father into our heavenly homeland. Our humanity is again blessed and made sacred through the incarnation of Jesus.

He himself tells us that it is better that he goes to the Father. In doing so, he is able to send to us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to guide and unify us as the body of Christ. In this way he fulfills his promise that he will be with us until the end of time.

Jesus died, rose and ascended so that he could be closer to us. And he is closer to us now more than ever; through his Holy Spirit and through his body

and blood on this altar. He is not limited by space or time. His spirit is present in all of creation, in all of us.

In our reading from Ephesians, we are told that we are one body, one spirit. We have been given spiritual gifts; some of us are prophets; some of us evangelists; some are teachers; some are pastors. All these gifts are given to build up the Body of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

In our gospel Jesus commissions his disciples, and us, today, to proclaim the Good News to the whole of creation. We are given the gifts of wisdom, understanding, the gift of tongues, the ability to heal the sick and cast out demons.

But in our weakness and our brokenness we might ask how are we supposed to accomplish the seemingly impossible task of proclaiming Jesus to the whole world?

I have trouble remembering what I'm supposed to do on any given day, let alone proclaiming Jesus to the ends of the earth!

Can we really love others as our Lord has loved us? Can we really bring others to Jesus as the apostles did? Can we go out and announce the Gospel of the Lord in our homes, our schools and our places of work and leisure?

It seems so difficult to accomplish this, especially in this place at this time. We can't invite anyone into our homes. We can't hug those we greet. We can't visit those who need us in our nursing homes and hospitals.

We can't even assemble at mass together. How can we expect to make a difference, to serve, to touch others with our love and concern?

Two weeks ago we heard in John's gospel Jesus telling his disciples:

“Abide in me as I abide in you. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

And last week we heard again from John's gospel:

“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you: abide in my love.”

And that is precisely what we need to do; abide in him; to abide or remain with. To rest, to cling to, to linger in his presence, to stay. Jesus is not simply our example, more importantly, he is our beginning. He is where love originates from.

We must abide or remain in him if we are truly to love others as he has loved us. We must abide, continue to be with him.

His commandment to us isn't to attempt to proclaim the good news, through our own depleted and broken selves, but rather that we abide in him where this kind of love becomes possible. When we make our home in Christ, in his love, through the power of his Holy Spirit, then our mission impossible becomes mission possible.

We need to take time to rest in the Lord, to put ourselves in his presence and refresh our tired bodies and our tired spirits.

We need to recharge our batteries, and then go out and give away what we have been given by his Spirit of Truth and Love.

Abiding in him is something we need to do every day; through prayer, scripture or just through some quiet time in his presence.

One of the most peaceful times in my life was a time, while on retreat, that I just laid down on the floor before the tabernacle in a makeshift chapel, and just closed my eyes and rested in the Lord.

Our Lord tells us today to go into the world and proclaim the Good News to all of creation. This is a daunting command and he knows that we need him to help us do this.

That is why he gives us his Spirit. That is why we need to spend time resting in his presence. Only then will our Lord radiate through us as we love and serve those in most need around us.

Our reading from the Acts of the Apostles today has the two men in white robes asking the disciples:

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?” In other words, what are you waiting for, go out and do something.