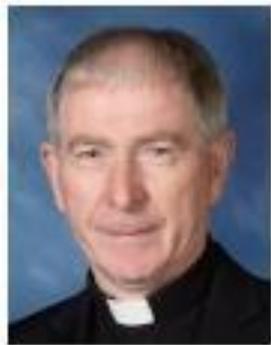


Father Martin's Pen

June 02, 2019



We are celebrating the Feast of the Ascension. The big event on that day used to be a little work for the altar server.

After the gospel was read by the priest and before the homily, the altar server with much self-consciousness would take the candle extinguisher and put out the light on the Paschal Candle.

Jesus was ascended so there was no need for a symbolic presence in the altar area such as represented by the Paschal Candle. This has changed so that now the Easter Candle is retained lit in the Sanctuary area until the feast of Pentecost.

The extinguishing of the Candle now belongs only in the Extraordinary form of the Mass, that is the Mass that is celebrated in Latin. I recall being the altar server whose auspicious role was to extinguish the candle. It was my moment in the sun!!

So why the change? Ascension as a feast is traditionally celebrated 40 days after Easter, while Pentecost is 50 days. There may have been some sense of an absent Jesus for the 10 days in between. Jesus left to ascend to Glory, but we had to wait 10 days for the Holy Spirit.

Remember the words of Jesus to his disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel. "...know that I am with you **always**; yes to the end of time." Mt. 28.20. After the Resurrection Jesus is never absent from us.

If you read the Gospel of John, Jesus directly gives the Holy Spirit to the Disciples on Easter Sunday evening. Jn. 20.22.

There is no time that divinity is not with us after Easter.

The Easter Candle remains very much with us throughout the year, but only for special events such as Baptisms and Funerals.

In baptism a small candle is lit from the Easter candle to show the link between the new Christian and Christ. For funerals the imagery is different, in that the candle now points to the Passover of the Christian from this life to heaven, the disciple is following Jesus to Glory.

If you use your imagination, you could understand that the Paschal Candle is like an **eternal flame that is never put out**. Someplace all over the world for all 24 hours of the day, someone is being baptized and someone is being laid to rest.

Alleluia (allelu = praise, ia = Yahweh) forever.

Father Martin

Rev. Martin J. Bourke
Parish Priest
Visitation & Holy Rosary Parishes
Archdiocese of Seattle