

Today we celebrate the feast of the Ascension of Jesus. It is an important day because Jesus makes an incredible promise to us: **“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of time.”** No matter what twists and turns life takes, Jesus is with us.

The early followers of Jesus weren't chosen because of their deep faith or special talents. Like us, they struggled to understand at times. Most of them fled when Jesus was crucified and hid in fear; they didn't know the way forward. So, just before his ascension, Jesus makes the incredible promise to be with them until the end of time. We, like those early followers, are not alone.

Let's look at the original followers for a moment. Imagine what it must have been like for them. Jesus came into their lives and they gave up everything to follow him. They were called to step out of their ordinariness and rise to a new challenge. For three years Jesus taught them what it meant to be his follower and now, Jesus was going to leave them in his earthly form, but he promised to send the Holy Spirit to live within them – to guide them as they built the church.

The Feast of the Ascension celebrates more than just Jesus ascending into heaven. Jesus spent his ministry raising others up, setting people free from all that weighed them down. The reality is that all of us want to be raised up, to live ascended lives. We want to break free from all the stuff that weighs us down, but sometimes it takes a helping hand. Whether we recognize it or not, we all have the desire to belong, to be part of something greater than ourselves.

The job of the Church, you and I, is to be that out-stretched hand to one another. When I was in high school, my principal was a wise Adrian Dominican, Sr. Rose. She said something that I still remember today. She said, **“...as Christians, we must always see**

Christ in one another and we must always be Christ to one another. That is our task.”

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles highlights the urgency of the message. After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers were standing there trying to absorb all that had just happened, when two angels appeared and challenged them with a simple question – people of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? In other words: what are you waiting for? Get busy!

As followers of Jesus we are challenged to stop spending our time staring at the sky, thinking about what it means to be a Christian. The message of the angels still applies to us today – stop thinking about it and simply GO.

Go – and transform the world

Go – and pick up those who have fallen

Go – and heal those who are hurting

Go – and feed the hungry

Go – and care for the sick and lonely

Go – and build my Church!

Prayer is an integral part of our faith, but Jesus was clear that we have to let our prayer lead us to action, to transform our lives. We have to move off the dime and to get our hands dirty in the work of salvation.

Next week we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. It was the gift of the Holy Spirit that gave the followers of Jesus, you and I included, the strength and courage to become the Body of Christ in the world.

Ascension Sunday Year A
Christ the Good Shepherd, OCC
Msgr. Harry Posner
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And even in the midst of the crises and challenges we face, God gives us the grace to remember who we are – Christ to one another.

The message of this beautiful feast is simple: do not stay too long on the mountain. Do not spend all your time gazing at the stars, living in the past or dreaming about the future. We are the Body of Christ here on earth and each one of us, in our own unique way, share in the task of continuing Christ's mission. St Theresa of Avila put it this way:

Christ has no body here on earth but yours now, no hands but yours, no feet but yours; your eyes are the eyes through which Christ looks compassionately on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good, and yours are the hands with which he is to bless us now.

My friends, as we continue our life journey, remember the words of Sr. Rose: “...**as Christians, we must always see Christ in one another and we must always be Christ to one another. That is our task.**” Go forth today to live the gospel in your own unique way. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you and give you the strength and courage to live as a beloved child of God.

Can I hear an Amen?