

Ascension

My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today's readings describe the Ascension of the Lord Jesus, his Heavenly glory after promising to send the Apostles the Holy Spirit as the source of Heavenly power and commanding them to bear witness to Him through their lives and preaching throughout the world. But the ascended Jesus is still with us because of His promise, "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." He is with us at all times and in all places, releasing a new energy upon the earth, the energy of the Holy Spirit.

One of the stories about Leonardo da Vinci helps us to understand the feast of the Ascension more deeply. Leonardo da Vinci had started to work on a large canvas in his studio. For a while he worked at it – choosing the subject, planning the perspective, sketching the outline, applying the colors, with his own inimitable genius. Then suddenly he stopped working on it. Summoning one of his talented students, the master invited him to complete the work. The horrified student protested that he was both unworthy and unable to complete the great painting which his master had begun. But da Vinci silenced him. "Will not what I have done inspire you to do your best?" Jesus our Master began to spread the Good News two thousand years ago by what he said and did, and supremely by what he suffered. Jesus illustrated his message and left us to finish the picture. Will Jesus' life not inspire us to finish the picture? This is the message of the Ascension.

In the second reading, Paul teaches us that God revealed His might in the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, exalting him over all angelic forces. Jesus remains accessible to us now in the life-giving Holy Spirit, assuring us that one day we, too, will be ascending to Heavenly glory, provided that, with His grace, we live out our Faith in Him through the mission of loving service He entrusts to us.

Today's Gospel tells us that, with his return to the Father, Jesus completes his mission on earth. But just before his Ascension, Jesus entrusted to the disciples the mission of preaching the Good News and evangelizing the whole world by bearing witness to him through their lives. It is in the Ascension that we see Jesus entering fully into the life and glory of God. In the descriptions of Christ after his Resurrection, we are given a hint of what life will be like in Heaven. The prospect of sharing that glory should be the driving force of our lives. Do you believe this?

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