

2020 May 24

*Seventh (Ascension) Sunday of Easter*

**Readings:**

*First: Acts 1.1-11, "He was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight." (9b)*

*Psalms 47, "Shout to God with loud songs of joy." (1b)*

*Second: Ephesians 1.17-23, "God put this power to work in Christ." (20a)*

*Gospel: Matthew 28.16-20, "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of age." (20)*

### *The Great Sending.*

On the day of the Ascension Jesus directed the disciples to go ahead of him to Olivet, a mountain in Bethany of Galilee. There he gives them the 'mission command', the great sending in Matthew 28.19-20. The gospel according to Matthew ends here while Mark and Luke report the event of Ascension. St. Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians states that the risen Lord once appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters. In all probability this could be at the event of Ascension (1 Corinthians 15.6), and the biggest crowd before which Jesus appeared after resurrection.

For the rest of the world and for us Christians resurrection has been a communication of faith transmitted by those who believed in the resurrection of Jesus. Many of us consider that faith in Jesus and its expression ends at our weekend observance. The one important message we are given at the end, after the final blessing in the liturgy is, *'the mass is ended, go forth'*. It is a message of sending out to witness to the Easter experience we shared around the altar of sacrifice.

It is the same message Jesus gave to the disciples and their followers before the Ascension, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28.19-20). We are expected to carry out this message beginning from the very doorsteps of the church by entering into a conversation with those coming out the door, carrying it on to our table at home and expanding it in our work place and to our neighborhood, thus allowing it to reach all nations, to the ends of the earth.

This exhortation at the end of the mass is the continuation of the above great sending command of Jesus. It was to the disciples on the day of Ascension and is to us today. Let us give a thought to it and be reminded that our faith in the risen Jesus does not end at the mere weekend observance. This sharing is our mission, is the command received from the Lord at our baptism, and above all, it is the greatest of all privileges to be on a mission for and with Jesus!

*Fr. George*