

2021 May 16

**Seventh Sunday of Easter. Ascension of the Lord.**

**Reading:**

**First:** Acts 1.1-11, "And a cloud took him out of their sight." (9b)

**The Psalm:** 47, "God is king over the nations." (8a)

**Second:** Ephesians 4.1-13, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself captive." (8)

**The Gospel:** Mark 16.15-20, "The Lord Jesus after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." (19)

**Kingdom-Body Builders**

Luke's reporting of the Ascension is recorded in two places, at the end of the gospel and at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles. These two portions together give a broader and elaborate picture of the last visible presence of Jesus on earth. In the gospels according to Mark and Luke just before the Ascension Jesus reminded the disciples of all that is written about himself in the whole scripture. Mark is the only one among the evangelists who reported that Jesus took his seat in heaven at the right hand of God. St. Paul also in the letter to Ephesians speaks of God seating Christ "at his right hand in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 1.20) He also speaks about Christ as the one who came down from and going back to heaven. The important fact we must keep in mind is that Christ was the first to enter heaven from among all humans. Thus, he is the first-born human in heaven.

Our happiness in this happening is that the humanity he took to heaven was given to him by one among us, or by two if we consider St. Joseph as the biological father of Jesus. It is our humanity he took to heaven. With that humanity, now transformed and made fit for immortality and life in eternity, he is seated at the right hand of God the Almighty Father to reign with the Father. We humans are given a share in this reign because of Christ's human incarnation. His seating at the right hand of the Father is also a guarantee for us that we will reach the same kingdom where Christ reigns.

That assurance comes from the last minute prayer of Jesus, who while on earth, just before his sacrificial death, prayed for us to the Father that we be allowed to be in the same place where he is and will be. (John 17.24) It is impossible for the Father to deny this prayer; we have every reason to be of good cheer. In between we have work to finish, as St. Paul says, "*Work of ministry for building up the body of Christ.*" (Ephesians 1.12) Building up the kingdom, the Body of Christ, is to be done here on earth. Each of us form the building block and the tool in that kingdom-building. Each is assisting the chief builder, Christ the Lord and Master builder.

Jesus has only laid the foundation for the kingdom. Building on this foundation is left to us. Our combined strength in working on the foundation and for the kingdom is the strength of the kingdom. The two men who appeared in white robe after the Ascension of our Lord in effect were telling those who stayed back, fixing their eyes on heaven, that they need to go back to complete the work Jesus started. Jesus assured them before he took the 'flight' that assistance would come soon. He also assured them that he would be with them till the end of ages. Ascension reminds and prompts us to be on the work of building up the kingdom.

Fr. George

*(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)*

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