



Thoughts on the Journey...

Suanne Gettings—Pastoral Assistant

A little over 5 years ago, I was at the bedside of a woman who was nearing the end of her life. We prayed together and then had a long conversation about her 67 years on this earth.

When the conversation began to wind down, I asked her, "Bev, do you have any regrets?" She paused for a moment, her eyes began to tear, and she said, "I regret that I didn't have my priorities in order when I was raising my children." She went on to say, "I wanted my kids to excel in everything: sports, academics, the arts, whatever they did, I wanted them to be the biggest and the best. Everything I taught them was measured by what the world deems as successful with little to no emphasis on their faith life or their relationship with Christ. Beverly went on further to say, "If I'm honest with myself, I cared more about what other people thought of me and my children than I did of what Christ thought. Now that they're grown, they measure their success by the cars they drive, the houses they live in, the positions they hold. They place more importance on everything but the things that really matter. And sadly, I'm the one who taught them this; I taught them to be selfish. Case in point, Suanne, I'm dying and not one of my four kids have come to see me." And then she asked herself, "What legacy of faith have I left my children?"

I left Beverly that day thinking about the legacy of faith I'm leaving, not only to my children, but the legacy of faith I'm leaving to the lives of those I touch in the world. Am I an authentic witness to Jesus' life? Am I living the Gospel? When people see me, do they see a disciple of Christ? These are wonderful questions to ask ourselves on this Feast of the Ascension.

Jesus walked this earth for over 30 years. When he began his public ministry, he chose his apostles. Jesus didn't choose the wisest and brightest by worldly standards. No! He chose everyday ordinary people like you and me. He developed friendships with them, taught them, and side-by-side with them, he lived the very values he wanted his followers to embrace: love, humility, compassion, mercy, servitude, tolerance. Jesus was all about his heavenly Father's business and part of his mission on this earth was to leave a legacy of faith to those he would trust to carry on his mission of salvation.

For the hours following Jesus' death, his choice of apostles didn't look too promising. They were huddled in fear in an upper room and confused as to what really happened. But, as Jesus promised, he did not leave them alone in their fear and confusion. He returned to

them in the flesh to be sure they understood the big picture, to give final instructions, to reassure them. He wanted them, too, to be about the business of his heavenly Father. He said to his apostles before leaving:

"All power 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

Christ knew what a huge undertaking this would be, but he gave them everything they needed to succeed. Jesus' ascension into heaven was a crucial part of the salvation plan. Jesus needed to return to his Father. But, make no mistake about it, he never abandoned the apostles! Quite the contrary! He gave the apostles *himself* in a new way. Rather than Jesus walking beside them on earth in the flesh, Jesus was now dwelling within each one of them, along with the saving power of the Holy Spirit! Jesus was no longer limited by time, or space, or matter. He would reside within each of them individually in an intimate way, never forsaking them – bonded to them heart and soul. It changed everything! These men, once huddled in fear, now entered Jerusalem with great joy!

Today we celebrate this feast of profound meaning and the promise of WHO WE ARE EMPOWERED TO BECOME IN HIM. The same legacy Jesus left his apostles is the same legacy that Jesus left for us, too, along with two thousand plus years of saints and ordinary every day people who prioritize their lives to being about the Father's business. The Feast of the Ascension we celebrate, reveals the inner meaning of the ongoing mission of the Church and our call to actively participate in building the kingdom of God, to live our lives in a way that brings others to the Father.

Jesus' life on earth was temporary, just as our life on earth is temporary. On this feast of great joy and hope, let us re-commit to being authentic witnesses who bring the light of Christ to a darkened world. Our life in Christ begins with having a relationship with Jesus that grows through prayer, service, scripture, and the sacraments.

What legacy of faith will we leave?