

Homily on the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, Year B 2021

Theme: He is with you. Always!

A Priest was having some conversation with a young man: At the end of school what do you want to do? I want to do my Senior Certificate. After your Senior Certificate what do you want to do? – I want to go to college. After college what do you want to do? – I want to get a job. Then what do you want to do? – I want to make big money. What do you want to do after making money? – I want to build a big house. After that what do you intend to do? – I want to get married. What will you do after getting married? – I will have a family. What will you do after having a family? – I will retire. What do you want to do after you retire? – I want to take a rest. What will you do after taking a rest? – I don't know. Will you die? – Oh yes, I will die too. What will happen after death? – I am not sure! Ascend or descend?

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord which marks the completion of Jesus earthly and bodily presence. Does it mean God has distanced Himself far away from us? By His Ascension, has Jesus disappeared far away into an inaccessible heaven, far beyond our touch, our sight, our reach? what is the meaning of Ascension to heaven of the risen Christ?

The first reading of today (Acts 1:1-11), gives an explicit account of the Ascension of our Lord. Having been commanded not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, the disciples are gathered together in a place. They converse with the Lord. And in this very context, as they were looking on, Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight.

The cloud imagery is found throughout the bible to signify God's enduring presence. When Israel went out of Egypt, the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud. When Moses climbed Mount Sinai to stand before God, the Lord descended in a cloud. The cloud reminds us of the hour of transfiguration and of baptism of Our Lord - from the cloud a voice that confirmed the divine sonship of Jesus was heard.

As such, the language of the cloud presents Jesus' departure, not as a journey the stars, or to the moon, but as entry into the mystery of God ... a God who is not bound by time, by space, by history, by situations. Hence, Jesus, at the moment of His Ascension, has not gone away from us, but His going is, a new form of closeness, of unlimited presence. He has not gone away, but remains close to us. Just as He entered into our history to be "God with us," and lived in our midst, for three solid years, as "God with us," now, He

elevates our mortal flesh to the mystery of God, abolishing all limits ... of space, of time, in order to be “God with us,” in a more exemplar fashion.

And indeed, these words as contained in our today’s Gospel passage (Mark 16:15-20): “And the commissioned disciples went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them ...” tell in volumes of His uninterrupted, yet enduring presence. He is with you. Always. We need to draw near to Him. We need to cling on Him. We need to follow Him. We need to make Him known.

Ours, then, on this Solemnity, is the vocation to be His credible witnesses to all bounds of the earth; and so, to make Him appear big, huge, beginning with our own homes, our places of work, our places of worship, our blessed nation of the United States. ... for there are no boundaries, no prohibited people to whom God’s love, cannot and should not reach.

Saint Paul reminds us in the second reading of today (Ephesians 4:1-13) that Christ ascended far above all the heavens that He might fill all things. And His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets ... for building up of the Body of Christ ...

And in this respect, we can help but recall a prayer poem that was composed by Saint Teresa of Avila ...

“Christ has no body but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which He looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which He blessed the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes. You are His body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.”

The Lord has ascended to heaven but His remains the command: You are my feet, my hands, my eyes ... “GO! GO! GO!” and fill the entire creation with my presence. No matter who you are, you have this mission. You have this mission to go out and share the Good news of Jesus and bring salvation to others. Today as Jesus ascends into heaven, may ours be a constant reminder that every road now leads to that same destiny.

May the Mother of the Incarnate Son of God, and our Mother, accompany us with her powerful intercession. Amen

Fr. Albert Kemboi

