

The readings for this Sunday's masses are for the Church's solemn celebration of the Lord's Ascension. Interestingly 20% of the U.S. still celebrates Ascension Thursday as a Holy day of obligation on May 21<sup>st</sup> which is 40 days after Easter (CatholicCulture.org). We are encouraged to do a smaller observance as well on May 21<sup>st</sup> if, as in our diocese, the Ascension has been moved to Sunday. If you like history like I do then I recommend searching the subject of this on the internet.

As with all readings for masses there is a plethora of potential meanings. Based on your spiritual journey and the context of your life you may focus on one or more personal meanings. Since being ordained I have always told parishioners that my thoughts in my homilies may only resonate with a minority of the assembly. God has spoken to me where I was and that may be different for many of you. For that reason I have always recommended that you prepare for mass by reading God's words in the assigned readings, and if possible using the technique known as "*Lectio Divina*" which is a monastic practice to open us up mentally and spiritually to communication with God. But for this homily I will tell you that I felt Jesus was pointing the Apostles and me on the journey ahead.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Nechayev Sergey coined the phrase "The ends justify the means." He believed his revolutionary goal was moral and therefore any means to get to it were justified. Later on Lenin and Stalin used murderous means for the same goal thus proving that immoral means do not justify any end! As Edward Dalberg Anton said "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." But Jesus shows us the WAY. He speaks TRUTH and gives us a way to share in His LIFE in all we do, say, think and believe.

St. Peter recalls the last conversation between Jesus and the Apostles. Even after all they had seen and heard they did not understand everything, much like many of us. When asked about temporal issues, Jesus respectfully scolds them and reminds them of their mission to continue His work. But He knows of the corruption of power and that Satan tried to corrupt him, and that evil will always try to corrupt any of us to prevent God's mission from advancing towards the goal. What is that goal? It is the end of age and the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Jesus Christ. And so like the Apostles we are sent out and we must remain moral in our means to accomplish this goal. After scolding them Jesus tells them that they will receive an incorruptible power, the Holy Spirit, to make them witnesses of all that Jesus told them and more. This is the very same Spirit that we received at our baptism. Like the angels' words we do not need to look upward for guidance, for it is within us, in the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul states, this Spirit gives us wisdom, revelation, knowledge, and enlightenment, and the list goes on.

In the Gospel, Matthew recounts how Jesus gives the Apostles and us our marching orders: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." And perhaps most importantly: "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." We do well to remind ourselves daily of these words. We are modern day apostles on a moral mission to an end, a righteous end, where Jesus will once again come and bring all his flock into the Kingdom. May we never tire or stray off the righteous path of our journey by allowing the Spirit to work through all of us.