

## Fr. Ryan's Homily May 24, 2020

Read: Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11 (58A); Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20

So every time we celebrate the Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension it's almost immediate that one memory, a very clear memory comes front and center in my mind and it's of when I moved away from home for the first time. Which for me didn't happen right after high school; I stayed at home 2 years right after high school because I was going to Fox Valley Tech, I was studying at the time to become a firefighter. And as a technical college they didn't have a dorm so you either stayed at home or maybe you got an apartment. And staying at home during that time it was great. Staying under my parents' roof was such a blessing during those years and it was comforting to be at home even as I was planning for the future. Of course, then God really pulled the rug out from under me by calling me to the priesthood and I new change was coming because the Seminary was out in Ohio four states away. And when it was time to leave my parents went down with me because the school had this sort of parent orientation as well, so we all went down together to Columbus, Ohio. I remember the first night there I even stayed with my parents in the hotel room, I didn't stay in the dorm the first night. So, I was very slow in kind of moving to this point of being on my own. But eventually, orientation did come to an end and the memory I have so clearly every time the Solemnity of the Ascension comes around is the moment my parents actually drove away. I'm waving to them and honestly part of me is dying inside because something that's familiar is leaving because I don't have the security of having my parents immediately there anymore. And I remember when I couldn't see their car anymore my first thought was now what. Now I'm really on my own. There was this true sense of I need to make this work and the weight of responsibility kind of descended on my shoulders at that moment. Not unsimilar to the first time I became a pastor and realized I was on my own as a priest or maybe the first time somebody becomes a parent and realizing that responsibility and I think something like that has happened or it will happen in all of our lives. Some people may look forward to that moment more than others, but it does come eventually for everybody. And for all my wanting to hold onto what was comfortable, what was safe, and known and secure, it was also a time for me to grow up and move away. It was time for me to mature in that way and not need my parents right there every step of the way. And I imagine the disciples had a

very similar experience watching Jesus ascend up into Heaven. As they are standing on this hill watching Him leave their sight part of them probably wanted Him to stay, for things to remain as they had been. But it was time for them to grow up, time for them to mature in their faith. Now my parents were not completely out of my life when they drove away and left me at college. They didn't stop loving me and I could easily call them and talk to them. They were still a presence in my life, they still are. Jesus is still with His church, He still loves every one of us, He's still present to us even though his earthly body has ascended. He even says, after He sends his disciples out into the world, He says that He is going to remain with us always. But parents, I would venture a guess, and say that one of your least favorite parts is when you have to referee your kids. Right! Little Tommy and Susie are in the backseat and you hear this blood curdling scream and you turn around to find out what happened and one of them says "she hit me" and he says "nope, I didn't even touch her" and you gotta be a referee to your kids. Or Johnny comes to mom or dad and says, "Lucy won't let me have a turn with the toy" and what do you have to turn into? A referee. Well, the disciples weren't above that behavior themselves in the Gospel, it happens a couple times. Remember the time when James and John the brothers come to Jesus and ask him to sit one on his right and one on his left and the other disciples are so offended by this they get into a big discussion about who is the greatest. Who is the greatest of Jesus' disciples? I mean it's just childish stuff. And so today Jesus is saying it's good for you that I go so that you can grow up. Otherwise, you'll never learn to love each other as you should. You'll have me keep refereeing your fights and your conflicts instead of learning my love for yourselves. What is Jesus doing for us by ascending, well, parents sometimes might have to say I love you now get out of my house. Time to grow up, I'm not going to be your referee anymore. And Jesus is saying it's time to grow up and interiorize my love. The disciples had watched Jesus' way of loving for years, now they have to live it themselves. And one last thing, Jesus has to go up for the Holy Spirit to come down. The Advocate, the Paraclete, that's what he calls Him. Those are words that mean that basically the one that whispers the truth into your ear. The Holy Spirit is the one who whispers the truth into your ear, and He cannot come if I don't go, Jesus says. Because, as I said, Jesus was the problem solver in the Gospel, the disciples have an issue with this guy or that guy, go to Jesus. Jesus didn't want that. He wanted them to love one another, to go to one another in

honesty and in openness, that's number one. But secondly, if Jesus had remained as he was in the flesh, we would have to get on a boat, buy a ticket for a plane and travel to the other side of the world if we want to see Him. And at first, we might kinda say oh that's neat. Well, get in line behind a billion other people who want to do the same thing. But Jesus said I will be with you all days until the end of the world and then he disappeared because he moved himself into all the tabernacles of the world. You follow me? It was good for him to go so that the Holy Spirit who gives us Jesus in the Eucharist could come. In other words, Jesus wasn't just going to the Father in Heaven, He was going to all the tabernacles of the world over the course of these 2,000 years. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, wherever the Eucharist is reserved, Jesus is there by the power of the Holy Spirit who was given on Pentecost. If Jesus had stayed in one place it wouldn't have worked. He wants His followers to mature in loving as He did and He wants His word to go out, His presence to go out to all the world not simply to be localized in this little mountain town in the Holy Land. And friends, I don't know if we cherish that enough as Christians, that Jesus is available to us. He is closer to us, were told in scripture, then we are to ourselves. Wherever we are when we bow our head a begin to pray, Jesus begins to listen, and he begins to speak. He is so close to us, so closely united Himself to His people, the church, that sometimes we fail to see Him. That's how close he is. But he remains in our midst, in our tabernacles and in our hearts. And so, by ascending Jesus was saying, it's time to grow up my friends, time to make my life into your life. And Jesus is not gone; He is in fact closer to us now then we could have ever hoped.

Amen