

**Ascension of the Lord A**  
**We are Witnesses of Jesus: Go Forth in Faith and Joy!**  
Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-3,6-7,8-9; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20

Dear brothers and sisters,

Happy Ascension Sunday!

This feast is a celebration of Article 6 of the Apostles' Creed: "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father". We proclaim the completion of Jesus' earthly mission and the inauguration of his kingdom. And believe that he sits at the "Right hand of the Father." It is not a literal place but a reference to the glory and honor of divinity, where he reigns and intercedes for all humanity. This intercessory power of our Lord Jesus is exercised in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Jesus' Ascension to Heaven marks his enduring presence as God-with-us. It is not abandonment; it is Jesus empowering his followers and promising, "I will be with you until the end of time." The Holy Spirit fulfills this promise, and we receive the mandate to make disciples.

In the first reading, Jesus gives a clear mandate: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses..." (Acts 1:8). While the disciples seemed glued to watching Jesus ascend into the clouds, the angels goaded them to fulfill what Jesus had said to them.

Like the disciples, we are called to be Jesus' witnesses. Being his witness is at the heart of following Jesus. This reminds me of what an old, retired priest said: in the community, there are three kinds of people. The first are those who make things happen; the second, those who wait for things to happen; and the third, those who don't know what happens. If given a choice, most would choose to be among those who make things happen.

How are you as a witness?

Remember, a person can become outwardly religious yet remain unchanged within. St. Paul captures this in his prayerful exhortation: "May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones" (Eph. 1:17).

When our hearts are enlightened, we become profound witnesses. An enlightened heart could mean being honest even when no one is watching, being truthful in speech, being humble and forgiving even when criticized, being respectful even when insulted, being peaceful even when misunderstood, yet being courageous in defending what is right and true.

Commit to praying for an enlightened heart. Consider what specific actions you can take today.

As Jesus witnesses, we are missioned to make disciples. Jesus says, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20).

We are missioned to make missionary disciples who embrace the mind and heart of Jesus. To fulfill this mission, we must speak about our faith with humility and love. This may include a kind word, a gentle correction, a prayer for those in need, or a testimony of how Jesus has worked in our lives. It is the "little way" of St. Therese, which can enlighten hearts. Our words need not be perfect, only sincere.

Alongside our words, we make our witness genuine by serving others. Jesus said, “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me” (Mt 25:40). When you help the poor, forgive those who have hurt you, or give your time to those in need, you profoundly bless others and make the love of God concrete and visible.

Moreover, a life of discipleship is a life lived with the Holy Spirit. We rely on the power of the Holy Spirit more than on any power offered by the material world. This reliance is shown in our fidelity to prayer and to the celebration of the Holy Mass. Although our celebration of the Mass is centered on Jesus, it is fulfilled by the Holy Spirit.

If you think about it, the whole celebration unfolds through the Holy Spirit's presence and power. Just as we ask the Spirit to come upon our gifts of bread and wine, we ask the Spirit to come upon us as well to enlighten us, or at least make us worthy. Even though we are weak and sinful, our Lord Jesus chooses to come upon us. Unworthy as we may be because of our human frailty, he chooses to give himself to us through his Body and Blood, soul and divinity.

And so, after the Mass, it has long been a tradition of our Catholic faith that we are sent to share what we have received. “Ite, missa est” – Go, you are sent.” I dare say that those who go home after Holy Communion are not sacramentally sent. You missed the simple rite of dismissal and sending.

Jesus’ Ascension gives us our mission: empowered by the Holy Spirit, we keep it alive as we journey on earth with hearts and minds set on heaven.

Go forth in faith and joy—Happy Feast Day of your mission!

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Pastor