

Feast of the Ascension



Do you recall the first time you ever tried to ride a bike or ice skate or drive a car? Who coached you to develop these skills? How did you feel after you achieved your goal? However, just imagine how you would have felt if the person who taught you insisted on always performing these tasks for you for the rest of your life? What would that do to your self esteem?

Today's feast shows Jesus fulfilling His mission on earth. After much coaching, He has given His followers the gift of friendship, the ultimate command to love one another, and the assignment to enter the world and carry out the living of some very strong virtues in the face of overwhelming challenges. Now the moment of physical parting has arrived, but with an assuring promise: "Behold, I am with you always until the end of the age." All this is what is known as good mentoring!

The promise that Jesus left His followers would be fulfilled when God's "Family Spirit" would descend upon them on Pentecost and flood their hearts with courage and power. Coached to face the challenges and hardships that lie ahead, relying on the Spirit's wisdom and guidance, like good athletes they would carry on out in the unknown and untraveled fields of life on their own two feet.

However, facing the immediate crisis before them of stepping out into a dangerous world where they would be rejected, persecuted, and perhaps put to death did not seem like a good idea at the moment! In fear of their lives, they did the only reasonable thing: lock up and wait in prayer, in hope, in trust, that Jesus Who promised to remain with them always, would keep His Word.

Which brings us to a big question: What makes us truly human? Truly women and men of moral stature? Is it when we can stand up on our own, grounded in all those virtues that at our Baptism were lavishly poured into our souls? St. Paul asks today, "What IS the surpassing greatness of His power for us who believe. . .?" Perhaps this week, some reflection on this question may bring us to ask the same question of ourselves. What IS the "greatness" of God's power in me as a baptized follower of the same Jesus these first men and women knew, believed in, loved, and to which they surrendered their lives?

Jesus left after doing all He could to coach us in right living. The rest is up to us. It doesn't mean hoping and praying that God will heal our present dilemmas. That's in our hands. It's not getting discouraged because we pray so hard but nothing seems to improve. That's in our hands too. It's not wishing that the world could be a better place. That's definitely in our hands. After His ascension, Acts 1:11 tells of two men dressed in white who said to Jesus' followers, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up at the sky?" In other words, get with the program! Wait, pray, believe, choose, then act! Do whatever your deep heart, your basic longing, invites you to do! The power is given! Act on it!

This week, let us take time to reflect on those things in life that we are so deeply longing could change for the better. Let us challenge ourselves to take a step in effecting the change we desire. We have a good coach in Christ Who will guide us effectively. Again, in His own words, He promised, "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age!"

Two resources for your reflection as you 'wait and pray' are available to help you prepare for the coming of the Feast of Pentecost:

- a) NOVENA/RETREAT: THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST on our parish website and***
- b) Novena for Pentecost given by Dan Schutte:
www.danschuttemusic.com/wordpressstore/pentecostnovena***

***Sister Catherine Marie Bazar, OP with Sister Marcia Krause, OP
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