

Homily of Ascension of the Lord, Year C, 2025

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9; Ephesians 1:17-23; Luke 24:46-53

Why do we say “Ascension of the Lord,” but “Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary”? Jesus, as God the Son, by his own power, went into Heaven. In the Creed, we say, “He ascended into Heaven.” On the other hand, Mary was taken up into Heaven, not by her own power, but by God’s power. The word “assume” originates from the Latin word “assumere,” which means “to take up.” That is why we say, “assume responsibility,” meaning, “to take up responsibility.” The Catholic Church does not in any way mean “presume” or “suppose,” which is another meaning of the word “assume.” Hence, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is neither a presumption or a supposition but a mystical truth!

The idea that Jesus was a political messiah remained in the minds his disciples after his resurrection. It appears that his resurrection heightened their expectation. Having returned from the dead, they imagined that he had all the power to overthrow the Romans. “When they had gathered together, they asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?’” I guess that Jesus’ reply was confusing to them: “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” The disciples might have wondered, “We are talking about the restoration of the kingdom of Israel, and he is talking about the Father and the Holy Spirit. What’s the connection?” Their wondering could have been the reason when Jesus disappeared into the cloud, they stood confused and gazed intently at the sky until the angels came to minister to them.

What does the Ascension of the Lord mean to us?

First, Jesus ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God interceding for us. “Christ who died, and better still, rose and is seated at the right hand of God, interceding for us” (Romans 8:34). “Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25). “We have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just One” (1 John 2:1). Jesus says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Second, Jesus says, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am” (John 14:3). The angels said to the disciples, “This Jesus has been taken up into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.” The Preface 1 of today’s Eucharistic celebration says, “Mediator between God and man, judge of the world and Lord of hosts, he ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before.” We are, therefore, to be ready for his return and ready to follow him.

Third, Jesus is no longer physically in the world. As his followers, we are to continue his good deeds by witnessing him to the world. He says, “You shall be my witnesses.” Let us witness Jesus in such a way that at our last moment, he will say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your master’s happiness” (Matthew 25:23). Jesus is no longer physically in the world; but he remains in the

world through us, his disciples, his ambassadors, his witnesses, his Church. We are his mouth, his hand, his feet, and his heart. We are the Body of Christ.

St. Teresa of Avila writes, *“Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all 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.”*

Fourth, when Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples stood confused and gazed at the sky until two angels ministered to them and directed them what to do. As we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, we pray for all who are confused and experiencing empty gazing due to some helpless or hopeless situation in their lives. With faith and hope, let us shift our empty gazing to fixing our attention on God, on Jesus, and on the Holy Spirit. Let us gaze on the blessed assurances of the Word of God. As we do so, may God send his angels to minister to us and direct us. I invite us to pray with Psalm 121:1-2, “I raise my eyes toward the mountains. From whence shall come my help? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.” Hebrews 12:1-2 encourages us to “persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith.”

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