

## Homily of Solemnity of the Ascension, Year B (Mother's Day, 2018)

The followers of Jesus had always thought that he was a political messiah. That was why James and John requested Jesus to "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left" (Mark 11:37). The two disciples of Jesus on their way to Emmaus in utter disappointment said to the 'stranger,' "But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21). When he was about to ascend to heaven, their thought had still not changed. We see in the first reading: "When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus answered by promising them the Holy Spirit who will give them the spiritual authority that will enable them to become witnesses. Ascension of Jesus into heaven took place after forty days of Jesus' resurrection. What should we have in mind as we celebrate Ascension? What does the celebration mean to us?

First, Jesus is no longer physically present in the world. He told his disciples to take his place and become witnesses of him to the ends of the earth. Jesus has given us the same assignment as we are now his disciples and his representatives in the world. We are to continue the good works of Jesus. St. Teresa of Avila puts it this way: "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."

Second, Jesus ascended into heaven, and is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). The Book of Hebrews assures us, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So, let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help" (Hebrews 4:15-16). Our prayer life and faith are empowered and sustained by these biblical assurances that Jesus is interceding for us.

Third, Ascension means that we have hope of eternal dwelling. Jesus assures us, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be" (John 14:1-4). The world is nobody's permanent home. We are all pilgrims on a journey to our eternal dwelling place where Jesus has prepared for us. We are therefore encouraged, while on this journey, to live life that will lead us to the eternal dwelling place.

Ten Quotes about mothers:

- There is no role in life that is more essential than that of motherhood. *Elder Russell Ballard*
- A mother understands what a child does not say. *Jewish proverb*
- A mother is she who can take the place of all others but whose place no one else can take. *Cardinal Mermillod*
- The influence of a mother in the lives of her children is beyond calculation. *James Faust*
- Moms are like buttons—they hold everything together. *Unknown*
- When you are a mother you are never really alone in your thoughts. A mother always thinks twice, once for herself and once for her child. *Sophia Loren*
- Mother is the bank where we deposit all our hurts and worries. *Dewitt Talmage*
- Mother is the heartbeat in the home; and without her, there seems to be no heart throb. *Leroy Brownlow*
- The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. *Theodore Hesburgh*
- No gift to a mother can equal her gift to you – life. *Unknown*

God stopped the work of creation when he made woman. God blessed her with the gift of creating life. It is the greatest and highest responsibility. That is why to disrespect life at any stage of human development is sinful.

God demands our respect for mothers as we see in the Scriptures.

- The Lord confirms a mother's authority over her children (Sirach 3:2).
- "They store up riches who respect their mother" (Sirach 3:4).
- "They multiply sin who demean their mother" (Sirach 3:11).
- "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the Church and handed himself over for her... Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:25-28).

There is a saying that it is better that a person's flowers should be given to the person while the person can smell them. The smell of the rose flower which we give to all mothers today symbolize our love and gratitude and prayers. May God bless all mothers. Amen.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**