

Solemnity of the Ascension of The Lord – Cycle C

When I was younger, I did not understand Our Lord's Ascension. I thought it was a time of spiritual isolation...a time without divine friendship. Our Lord ascended & the Holy Spirit...the Advocate He promised, will not be with us until Pentecost. I think for many, the Ascension is somewhat misunderstood.

So, I want to try to help us better understand what we celebrate today and in doing so, try to help us better understand *who we are empowered to become*. To do this, we will focus on two (2) images from today's readings which capture the essence of the Solemnity we celebrate.

The first image is that of our earthly existence – the image of our feet *placed firmly on the ground*. When our feet are firm, *when we really know where we stand*, we better appreciate God's purpose for us. It is then we realize we are *the work of God's creation...a part of His plan...* His plan which created us in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26-27). We realize whatever *dignity* we have as *children of God* comes to us as *a gift from God*.

When our feet are placed firmly on the ground we are *less likely* to go astray, *less likely* to misuse our free will, *less likely* to condemn ourselves to a life of sin & suffering.

When we choose wrongly, we know of God's *displeasure* with what we have done; but we also *know of His love*. The same love which caused Him to *humble Himself*, become one of us and physically enter into human history, so that our lives are not merely a sequence of events, but rather a chapter in the book of salvation.

When our feet are placed firmly on the ground, we become rooted in the earth and therefore, destined for growth. Good works become part of our everyday

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life, simply because we know what it means to love –*by looking to the one who is love*. We see it in our relationships with others, in our care for the planet’s resources and as we lift those who are less fortunate so they too will firmly plant their feet, take root and grow.

When we do this well, over a long period of time, we might become a bit weary from the journey up the steep path of life. We may encounter indecision, tension, doubt and fear. We may look ahead to the day when the journey will one day end, and wonder; “*Is this all there is?* Is this all we have to look forward to????” Which leads us to our second important image today...

...when the question is asked: “*Why do you stand looking at the sky?*” ...at the very moment the Apostles were asking the Risen Lord about the restoration of Israel’s earthly kingdom – as if they were still trying to figure out, “Is this all there is?” “*He was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight.*” And “*they looked intently at the sky as He was going...*” (Acts 1:9-10). They *cast their gaze toward heaven* because they *looked to Jesus Christ*, the one who had been raised high on the cross to suffer and die, was *again raised high* to come into His Glory and be seated exactly as He should, at the right hand of His Father.

We do not know if, at that precise moment, the Men of Galilee realized what was happening before them...the revelation of *the ultimate goal of their earthly pilgrimage*. Perhaps these Men of Galilee only came to realize this on Pentecost, once the light of the Holy Spirit began to shine brightly upon them the following week. But for us, separated by two thousand (2,000) years, the meaning of the Ascension should be clear.

For we are called to *keep our feet firmly planted*; doing *the will of God*; imitating the Acts of the Apostles; *servicing His Kingdom* and making it a Kingdom

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of *goodness, justice, and mercy*. We are called to accept Christ's final challenge in today's Gospel and *be witnesses* in the world. We are called to bring *hope to the poor, relieve suffering, guide those who are lost and encourage those who yearn for freedom, truth and peace*.

Christ's Ascension does not mark the end of His relationship with us, His Church; rather the Ascension opens *a new way for Him to relate to the world...in and through His Church*. The Ascension is the day of final preparation for the wedding that is to occur between His Bride, the Church; and the bridegroom, Our Lord. The Ascension is *the bridge constructed between Heaven and earth*.

By His Ascension, the road that brings us to Pentecost is now paved, where the *divine love between Father and Son, in the form of the Holy Spirit is breathed onto each one of us* so that we may better participate in Our Lord's redemptive mission. By Christ piercing the veil of Heaven, He extends to each of us an invitation to *participate in the Divine Life*. For just as Christ took on our human nature, we are invited to become, "*participants in the Divine Nature*" (St. Peter 2nd letter) leaving no doubt that God is love *and God's love is in us*.

So, *when our feet are firmly planted and we lift our eyes to the One to whom we have looked for two thousand (2,000) years*, the divine reality within each one of us is made clear...*Christ is the Head of our Church...we are its body ...and we are not to be ever separated...*for the *Head and the Body remain One*.