May 16, 2021

Ascension of the Lord, Year B

***A shared mission with Jesus***

Leaving the family home is one of life’s biggest transitions for children. There are many reasons why they ‘leave the nest’. It may be to go to university, to start a job, to assert independence from parental control, to live with friends, to travel the world, to get married or to break free from difficult family situations.

Leaving can be exciting and adventurous, as well as frightening and overwhelming; not only for children, but also for their parents and siblings. Yet, it seems almost a law of nature that we have to leave home at some point in order to embrace adulthood and take responsibility for our life and its direction.

The Feast of the Ascension recognises and celebrates the truth that the Risen Jesus *leaves behind* the human realm to take his place in glory, *“higher than all the heavens to fill all things.”* (Ephesians 4:10) With his departure, Jesus and the apostles enter into a different kind of relationship. It will no longer be dependent on time or a place, but on faith. Just as children and parents have a real, yet very different relationship once children leave home, so also for the apostles in the way they relate to the Ascended Christ.

The Gospel of Mark says that after Jesus was taken from their sight, the apostles went out, preaching and performing signs and wonders. It’s now *their* responsibility to continue Jesus’ mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. The time has come for them to embrace their new found “adulthood” and accept their personal commission to go out and bring the love, healing and compassion of Jesus to individuals and communities. Their mission, which is ultimately the mission of Jesus, is to *“equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”* (Ephesians 4:12)

Jesus leaves the apostles to prepare them to receive the gifts of the Spirit at Pentecost. It’s the grace of the Spirit’s gifts that will inspire the apostles’ preaching and teaching and that will give life to new generations of followers, even in times of persecution and division. As Pope St John Paul II remarked, *“The Holy Spirit makes them witnesses and prophets. It fills them with a serene courage which impels them to pass on to others their experience of Jesus and the hope which motivates them.”* (*[Redemptoris Missio](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)*, 24).

The same Spirit is gifted to us in baptism and confirmation; calling us to follow the lead of the apostles and to embrace our responsibility for the mission of Christ in our time. The Ascension reminds us that we are called to greater things: nothing less than sharing with others our own experience of the Risen Christ. This is what the apostles did and what we too are also called to do.

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***We respond***

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Men of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens?

This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven will return as you saw him go, alleluia.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 46)

Antiphon: God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

RESPONSE: **God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

LECTOR: All peoples, clap your hands, cry to God with shouts of joy! For the Lord, the Most High, we must fear, great king over all the earth. R.

LECTOR: God goes up with shouts of joy; the Lord goes up with trumpet blast’ Sing praise for God, sing praise, sing praise to our king, sing praise. R

LECTOR: God is king of all the earth. Sing praise with all your skill. God is king over the nations; God reigns on his holy throne.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Alleluia, alleluia! Go and teach all people my gospel. I am with you always, until the end of the world. Alleluia!

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (or a hymn) Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age, alleluia.

TODAY’S READINGS Acts 1: 1-11; Ephesians 1: 17-23 or 4: 1-13; Mark 16: 15-20

NEXT WEEK (Pentecost, Year B) Acts 2: 1-11; Ps 103; Galatians 5: 16-25; John 15: 26-27, 16: 12-15