

Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, May 17th 2015

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Lectionary: 58

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

Ephesians 1:17-23 or Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13

Mark 10:15-20

For those who celebrated
the Ascension on May 14th,
this is the reflection for Sunday, May 17th,
the Seventh Sunday of Easter

Weekly Guide for Daily Prayer

Celebrating Easter

Today's Easter Prayer

At some early point in our earthly lives we all learn an inescapable law: “what goes up must come down.” Perhaps it was our childhood playground that taught us this best - a thrilling pull in our bellies as the swing catapults toward the ground; a blast of wind in our face as we rush down the slide; or the exhilarating drop from the highest point of the teeter-totter.

On today's Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, it behooves us to remember this law. In these final days of the Easter season, we contemporary disciples of Jesus stand beside his first disciples while they work to make sense of the new reality in their lives wherein Jesus has “left” them. As described in the Book of Acts, the disciples are standing heavy-footed, bent-necked, slack-jawed, staring at the sky - perhaps a sense of despair in their hearts.

How many times have I felt abandoned by Jesus?

How many times have I looked heavenward asking, “What do you want me to do next?!”

We read on in Acts about two white-garmented messengers who ask the disciples, “Why are you standing there looking at the sky?” They, like the white-washed messengers in the empty tomb, seem to be saying to me, “What are you doing looking here? Don't you remember what he told you about the Spirit?!”

The readings in the last weeks have been oozing with messages about the Spirit. Jesus has been doing his darndest to prepare us for his rising and for the falling of the Holy Spirit. “What goes up must come down.”

It is the Spirit that imbues us with the living Jesus beyond the cross, beyond the tomb, beyond the

blank skies above the disciples' heads at the Ascension. The Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins proclaims in his poem "God's Grandeur": "the Holy Ghost over the bent world broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings."

Do we allow ourselves to receive this Spirit into our lives? Jesus certainly asks us to use the Spirit as fuel to carry on with him the building of the Kingdom of God on earth.

In the Gospel reading today, Jesus gives us a police artist's sketch to help us identify the perpetrators of his message of love and forgiveness. They will be recognizable by their actions. They will fight for justice and peace by driving out the demons of oppression and hatred. They will learn new ways to proclaim ancient messages of hope so all might hear. They will courageously handle and tend to the slippery and slithery sins of our society without being bitten by them. They will ingest the bitter truths of our world without being destroyed by them. They will extend healing hands to tend to the wounds of others. Do I fit this description?

Spirit-laden, may we all work together to continue the good work of Jesus.

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