

May 16, 2021

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11

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

Eph 1:17-23

Mk 16:15-20

FULFILLING HIS WORDS!

What is the difference between the mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of the Ascension? Is there a connection between the two mysteries?

The **mystery of the Incarnation** talks about the ‘Word becoming flesh.’ It speaks about God becoming man in the person of the Lord Jesus. Its direction is ‘**from heaven to earth.**’ The Universal Church highlights this mystery on Christmas Day, December 25th. On the other hand, the **mystery of the Ascension** articulates a direction ‘**from earth to heaven.**’ The Universal Church celebrates it forty (40) days after Easter Sunday. It usually falls on a Thursday and marked as a ‘Holy Day of Obligation’ in most Dioceses around the world. Sad to say, few people attend to celebrate it on a Thursday. Thus, the Universal Church allowed it to be transferred on a Sunday so more people can celebrate this important mystery of the faith.

The **mystery of the Incarnation** and the **mystery of the Ascension** are connected to each other in the sense that the person who came down from heaven is the same person who ascended into heaven – **the Lord Jesus**. In the Gospel of John (3:13), the Lord Jesus himself said: **“No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man.”**

We are celebrating today, **not the mystery of the Incarnation, but the mystery of the Ascension of the Lord**. This feast marks the end of the Lord Jesus’ time on earth. At the same time, it signals the re-entry of the Lord Jesus into heaven, his place of origin, after accomplishing the mission entrusted to him by the Father. His going up to heaven conveys a clear message that he is truly the Lord of heaven and earth. His going up to heaven is not to abandon us, his people. Rather, he goes up in heaven to prepare a place for us. This is his promise to us when he said: **“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.”** (Jn 14:2-3)

Trusting in his words, this feast, therefore, should console/comfort us. **Why?** In the midst of our experience of uncertainties like this pandemic, we have something to look forward to when our time here on earth ends. His ascension gives us hope that one day we can be with him in heaven.

I am certain that we are all looking forward to being with the Lord Jesus in heaven. However, we are still here on earth. **What should we do while waiting to go to the place he prepared for us?**

Let me share a story to help us figure out what to do.

There is an ancient story about the Lord Jesus' ascension into heaven. As the Lord Jesus enters heaven, the angel Gabriel asked: **"Lord, now that your work is finished, what plans have you made to ensure that the truth that you brought to earth will spread throughout the world?"** The Lord Jesus answered, **"I have called some fishermen and tax-collectors to walk along with me as I did my Father's will."** "Yes, I know about them," said the angel Gabriel, **"but what other plans have you made?"** The Lord Jesus replied, **"I taught Peter, James and John about the kingdom of God; I taught Thomas about faith; and all of them were with me as I healed and preached to the multitudes."** The angel Gabriel responded, **"But you know how unreliable they were at times. Surely, you must have other plans to make sure your work was not in vain."** With a smile on his face, the Lord Jesus said to the angel Gabriel, **"I have no other plans. I am depending on them!! "**

What is the story telling us? The Lord Jesus' ascension into heaven signals to us to prepare ourselves because it is now our turn to do the work here on earth. It is now the time to roll up our sleeves and start 'walking the talk.' His ascension into heaven tells us that it is about time for us to put into practice the lessons we have learned from him. His ascension into heaven directs us to use our gifts/skills/talents in ministering to others and building up the Body of Christ – the Church. This is what St. Paul reminds us in our 2nd reading when he said: **"And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ..."** His ascension into heaven commissions/commands us to **"Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."**

In this Mass, therefore, let us thank the Lord Jesus for trusting us with a mission to continue his work here on earth. We beg him though to give us **the courage to proclaim the Gospel to all; the eagerness to share our gifts/skills/talents in building up the Church; and the strength to put our faith into practice every day of our lives.**

God bless us all!