

The Ascension of Our Lord (C)
May 8, 2016

Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Our Lord's Ascension which we celebrate today marks the exaltation and glorification of Jesus, the sign and seal of the accomplishment of His mission. The Ascension of our Lord marks also the end of that first period of *mystagogy* preached by our Lord Himself. St. Leo the Great observes that *the days which passed between the Lord's resurrection and ascension were by no means uneventful; during them great sacramental mysteries were confirmed, great truths revealed. In those days the fear of death with all its horrors was taken away, and the immortality of both body and soul affirmed.* (Sermo 1 de Ascensione, *Liturgy of the Hours*, Vol. II, p. 898). We too have reflected on these mysteries in our own *mystagogy*, or instruction on the Paschal Mystery, and we have especially dwelt on the truth of our dignity in Christ.

At the Ascension the Church learns the true meaning of her identity and we learn the full implications of Christian discipleship. The Ascension marks a point of transition; for what was called *discipleship* before Easter, is now more completely understood as *mission*, and this mission is also ours: *You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what the Father promised (Lk. 24:48).* Discipleship entails a participation in our Lord's mission of salvation and of bearing witness to the truth of Christ.

As the Father has sent me, even so I send you (Jn. 20:21). What this means for each one of us directly and personally, varies of course. What it clearly implies for all of us however, is the necessity of participating in some form in the Church's mission or service to the world. The most obvious expression of this mission is the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, admonishing the sinner, instructing the ignorant, praying for the conversion of sinners, and so on. The Apostle Paul reminds however, that *the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17).* We serve the mission of Christ and of His Church *best* by heeding the Apostle's exhortation: *If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not the things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).*

Though we find ourselves living in the third millennium after our Lord's Redemptive Incarnation, and though it is no exaggeration to say that the Gospel had indeed been proclaimed to the entire world, we are nevertheless living in a time of weak faith. It is not an exaggeration to say that we are experiencing a diabolical disorientation. Everywhere it seems, the order established by God, even in what pertains to the natural law, is militantly denied and opposed. Political atheism is increasingly a force to contend with, especially as it concerns the dignity of human life. The spectre of euthanasia looms over our nation. What are we to do? With even greater deliberation and purpose we must seek *the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.* Simply, this means that we live our lives with a view to Heaven and the *transcendent purpose of our lives.* First and foremost we must

give thanks to God for the gift of the true Faith. From our Heavenly Father we have indeed received *a spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the eyes of our hearts have been enlightened*. We do know *the hope to which he has called [us]* (Cf. *Eph.* 1:17); and so we seek an integrity of life that enables us to glorify God in all things (Cf. *1Pt.* 4:11). God has created us for eternity; to share His own Trinitarian life. This truth guides all our thoughts and actions.

In the absence of this truth, for many, life has become purposeless and consequently, increasingly without meaning, no longer subject even to the rule of law. The great deceiver, the antichrist tempts us most subtly with an *easy Christianity*; an effortless endeavour without work, without laws (*antinomianism*) and without sacrifice, without reverence for God, for ourselves, and for life itself. The world's iniquity has indeed ripened but a sure refuge is ours in the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the faithful disciple of Our Lord, and the image and model of the Church. Our Lady herself has come down from Heaven to teach us to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*.

Almost one hundred years ago, at Fatima, in Portugal, the Mother of God, Our Lady of the Rosary appeared to three little children and there She issued a clear call to conversion that expresses itself in our *personal consecration* to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. To Sister Lucia, one of the seers at Fatima our Lady said, *My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way that will lead you to God*. Our personal consecration, that is, the conformity of our lives to the Immaculate Heart of Mary is the simplest way to *seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God*.

With our Lady, in the embrace of her loving Heart we learn to adore the living God especially in His hidden presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The celebration and adoration of the Mystery of the Eucharist is our glory as Christians; and the efforts we make to glorify God and to honour and revere this Mystery result in a vibrant Catholic culture. The Sacrament of His Love inspires great deeds of love. From Our Lady we learn to make reparation; with loving hearts and sacrifices and penance we make reparation for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which Our Lord is offended, and we learn to imitate God's tender love for poor sinners.

In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph. Our Lady spoke these words at the third of the six apparitions at Fatima. These words should be our consolation and our strength as we seek to adore the living God in Christ and endeavour to bring about the establishment of His Kingdom and the social Kingship of Christ. On the 13th of this month and of every month until October, we will hold a rosary procession on our church grounds and we will honour Our Lady and invoke her powerful intercession. Like the Jewish people of old who at the command of the Lord God carried the Ark of the Covenant (Cf. *1 Chronicles* 15:15), we will bear the image of Mary, the Ark of the Covenant, for She bore Our Lord in her blessed womb and we will publicly profess our belief in the living God who in Christ has made us *a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that [we] might declare the wonderful deeds of him who has called [us] out of darkness into his marvelous light*. (*1 Pt.* 2:9).

On this Mother's Day we honour Our Lady, the Mother of God and we give thanks to God for the gift of motherhood.

