

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ASCENSION

Today we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, which means that Christ is now back in the glory of his father in heaven forty days after his resurrection. It is our hope. As Christians, we can learn so much about the event of the Ascension.

On this feast of the Ascension, I would like us to see in which way the ascension is important to our Catholic faith.

Jesus is God!

If we consider the Ascension as a goodbye that Jesus bids to his disciples, his departure from this earthly life, it reminds us of a basic truth about our faith.

Jesus is Lord and God.

The letter to Hebrews affirms that Jesus,

“after he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” (Hebrews 1:3; 12:2).

Peter reaffirms this in his epistle,

“Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.” (1 Peter 3:22).

Ascension means therefore that Jesus is God. If he was not God he was not going to be able to ascend to heaven. He does ascend by his own power. This is the second mystery of the Rosary.

Heaven is our destiny!

The second lesson is that heaven is more important. If the earth was more important, Jesus would have remained here on earth even after his resurrection. There is something beyond the earthly reality. The words of Jesus in his farewell discourse are the most attractive, consoling and powerful words when he says:

“Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms. If it were not so, 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 again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”
(John 14:1-3)

John the Beloved disciple, in his vision, “saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. He also saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And he heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Cf. Revelations 21:1-4). The Ascension reminds us that this earth is not our final destination. Let us turn our eyes to the things of heaven. No wonder Paul does advise us:

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”
(Colossians 3:2)

Our destiny is not in the grave, but in heaven. God so loved us that he gave us his only Son, that whoever among us believes in him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The responsibility is now ours!

The third lesson is related to our mission. We are now the “new Jesus”. In the first readings from the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus invites us to stop looking at the sky, but to now become aware of our responsibility of preaching the Good news. Because of his Ascension, the main responsibility of healing, protecting and serving our community, is now ours. We were invited to use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in order to build up the body of Christ, our Church, family, and our society. Jesus going to heaven, handing-over the mission of his church to us, as his disciples. He hands-over to us his power, his authority and his mission. Jesus is trusting every one of us according to their status, their strength, their abilities, their means to take up these responsibilities. Dear friends, the responsibility to bring God to people is now ours. If we live like Christ, we will take us with him in heaven.

May we long for the moment when we will meet with Jesus in heaven. Yes, heaven is our home! As St. Augustine once said:

“Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him.”

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