

**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ**  
**Theme: We're Heaven-bound People, Not Earth-bound People**

The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated on Thursday in some dioceses in the US and around the world. In our diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and other dioceses around the world, it is transferred from Thursday to the 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter. Ascension is commemorated 40 days after Easter Sunday (the day of Jesus' resurrection). It means next week will be the celebration of the Solemnity of Pentecost, 50 days after Easter Sunday. That will end the Easter season and bring us into the Ordinary Season in our liturgical calendar.

All three readings give us accounts of the ascension. Luke, in the Acts of Apostles, gives us a more detailed account than Mark. Mark is more brief/concise. For Luke, the ascension marks the end of the appearances of Jesus except for the extraordinary appearance to Paul. With regard to Luke's understanding of salvation history, the ascension also marks the end of the time of Jesus' earthly ministry and indicates the beginning mission of his apostles and the early Christian community.

The theological meaning of the Solemnity of Ascension of Jesus can be found in the second reading. In Ephesians 1:17-23, St. Paul explains the meaning of the ascension: God has glorified Jesus Christ, raising him above all earthly powers and making him the head of the Church and the Lord of creation. It is great day for us to rejoice and not be sad because where Jesus is gone to, by the grace of God, we will be there also with him. The celebration of the Ascension should remind all of us that we are heaven-bound people not earth-bound people. Therefore, we're pilgrims here on earth, and heaven is our true home. Whatever we do here on earth must be things that will lead us to our final and eternal home in heaven.

For us to get into heaven, St. Mark, in his Gospel we have just heard today, reminds us of the task/mission that Jesus wants us to carry out if we really want to be with him in heaven, namely: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned." Beloved, Jesus entrusted this task/mission not only to priests and religious but to all his followers/Christians. He has mandated all of us to preach his Gospel in words and deeds. Remember, many people today claim they do not have time to read/pray with the Bible. Your life is the "Bible" that they have time to read/pray with. As someone said, "Besides there are 4 official Gospels. But the '5<sup>th</sup> Gospel' is the according to you."

Jesus went on to say if we believe and preach the Gospel, these signs will accompany us: "In my name (Jesus) they(us) will speak new languages, pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." We must not take it literally. With faith in God and his Son, Jesus Christ, through our various professions as healthcare providers, farmers, law enforcement agents, essential workers, teachers etc., we are performing these signs Jesus mentioned. If we put Jesus in the center of our profession, our profession becomes a vocation. Whatever we do to the least of our brothers/sisters, it is Jesus we're doing for, as the word of God tells us.

Today we celebrate Mother's Day. It is a special day; we honor these great women in our lives. I can't imagine a second without our mothers. They are the first to get up from bed and the last to go to bed. Our mothers are one of the most precious gifts God has blessed us with. Please let us give the love and respect that our mothers deserve now, not when they are dead and gone. It'll be too late! As you someone put it so well "Give your mom the flowers now when she is living, not when she died." The dead do not need flowers!

During our novena this week, the 9-day prayer to the Holy Spirit, let us remember our mothers both living and deceased. Let us ask God to bless and reward them for their motherly love for us.

May 14 is the final day for voting. Please remember, it is your civic responsibility as a faithful Catholic to vote during an election. The early voting is going now from Monday through Saturday.

Happy and blessed Mother's Day to all our mothers.