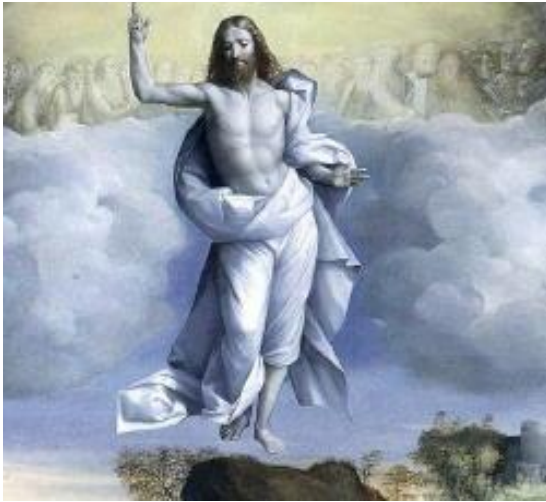


Sunday Readings Study for Small Communities
SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Cycle C - May 29, 2022



OPENING PRAYER

Leader: God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; the Lord, amid trumpet blasts. Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise.

All: All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness, For the Lord, the Most High, the awesome, is the great king over all the earth.

Leader: *Let us invoke the presence of God:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit have instructed the hearts of the faithful grant that by the same Spirit we may truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations.

FIRST READING [Acts 1 (1-11)]

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."

We men have a series of limitations to be able to encompass with our mind the immensity of God and to be able to understand divine things and that do not belong to our temporal world. For this reason, we often resort to images that give us a rough idea, or that offer us a way of imagining what none of us has seen yet.

For example, we are used to imagining God as an old man with a long white beard, seated on a throne and very serious, never smiling. He is the product of the artists of a time who represented him that way. But God does not have a gender, because he is neither male nor female, nor is he an old man, nor does he have the same face that he gave us men, so he does not have a face either, much less a beard. Nor is it possible for a being who is all love to be as serious as the artists have represented him. But those images, although imperfect, have helped us to imagine God as a Father to whom we turn when we recognize ourselves unable to meet our needs.

Another image that we men have had to invent to understand the things of God is that of heaven. We imagine it as something that is above us. A place to climb. Heaven is up there, and we are down here. The authors of the Bible have taught us that God lives in heaven and has given the earth to men. So it is not strange that Luke describes the return of the Son to heaven in the way we read it: Ascending to the skies.

And it is not that heaven is a place, but a state. Everything that belongs to eternity cannot be contained within limits because it is infinite, that is, unlimited. For this reason, heaven, which is the presence of God, cannot have doors either, just as we imagine it. When we have finished our passage through this world, at the end of our short

material life, we will enter another dimension, the spiritual one, in which we will enjoy the direct presence of God. That's heaven. And the impossibility of being there will be the worst punishment... hell.

(1) What strikes you about this reading? Why?

(2) The disciples, gathered around the table, ask Christ a question. What did they expect from Jesus Christ as Messiah?

(3) Later, the disciples were able to discover that the messianism of Jesus Christ was not what they believed. How did they discover this new reality? (Key: remember the promise of Jesus Christ in last Sunday's Gospel)

SECOND READING [Ephesians 1 (17-23)]

Brothers and sisters: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might: which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

The center of our faith is Jesus Christ. That is why we call ourselves Christians. And Jesus Christ is the one who has carried out God's plan of universal salvation, which was not known, but which has been revealed in what he calls the apostle, "the fullness of time." God revealed himself first through the prophets, who were intermediaries. He revealed himself through some people (that is why it is called "Mediate Revelation"). Later, when he became incarnate, in the person of Jesus Christ, the Divine Revelation no longer needed intermediaries, because Christ spoke. (That's why it's called "Immediate Revelation.")

In biblical language the verb "to know" is synonymous with "to have an intimate relationship". Knowing God, then, is establishing and maintaining a very close relationship with him. But no one gets to know what he does not treat, or what is indifferent to him. To know God it is necessary to seek him through his Revelation. God has revealed himself so that those who want to know who he is can do so. And the Revelation of God is contained in the Bible. The Word of God is the instrument par excellence to know God, to discover what his will is and to come to love him.

That is why the prayer of the apostle Saint Paul is very good when he asks God for us when he says: «...I ask him to enlighten your minds...» In this way, we will be able to receive «...the spirit of wisdom and of revelation to know him»

(1) What strikes you about this reading? Why?

(2) Read 1 Timothy 2 (5) How can this verse be interpreted?

(3) Read 2 Timothy 3 (15-17). reflect and comment

GOSPEL [Luke 24 (46-53)]

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.

The evangelist Luke composed two works: The Gospel and Acts of the Apostles. The episode of the Ascension is a kind of bridge that unites both writings, since it is found at the end of the Gospel (the passage we are reading today), and also at the beginning of the book of Acts (the passage of the first reading).

In both passages we find the same basic elements: The promise of the Holy Spirit - The constitution of the disciples as witnesses - The missionary sending.

The early Christians were intensely guided by the last words of the risen Jesus Christ. And what constituted the message from the very beginning of our Church was the Christian proclamation that Jesus is the Messiah, that he has died and risen, and that all this responds perfectly to God's plan, which can be known through the Holy Scriptures. To carry out this work, Christians have always counted on God's help, manifested through the presence of his Spirit.

One thing that stands out, and is worth commenting on here, is that Luke begins his writing in the Gospel in Jerusalem (with the account of Zechariah receiving the announcement of John's birth) and concludes his narratives with the Ascension, which according to Luke, it happened in Jerusalem. In this way, the evangelist seeks to make us see that in Jesus the prophetic announcements of the Old Testament are fulfilled.

- (1) Read 1 Corinthians 15 (3-5). What does Paul confess to us?
- (2) Paul received initial instruction upon becoming a Christian, what were the basic elements of the preaching he received?
- (3) After answering the previous question, did Paul need to know where and how Jesus was born? From his miracles? Of his parables? What idea did Paul learn first?
- (4) It is not about ignoring other aspects of Jesus' life, such as his virgin birth, his miracles, and his teachings. All of this is important, but it is not THE important thing. What is the center of our faith? What is the important?
- (5) Read Isaiah 2 (2-5). This text was composed about seven centuries before Christ. How could we relate it to the Gospel?
- (6) After answering the previous question, could we say that God is an improviser, who moves based on passing whims? Why?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day* **ding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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