

The Gospels contain many parables of a master who sets out on a long journey and gives his servants charge of his estate until his return. **In the feast of the Ascension of the Lord parable becomes reality. Jesus departs to his heavenly Father and leaves his disciples in charge of the affairs of his kingdom till his return in glory.** Each of the Gospels we have ends with a scene in which Jesus finally takes leave of his disciples. These farewell scenes focus not on describing the event in detail but on the last words that Jesus leaves with his disciples.

So what is the message, the **charge or commission** that Jesus gives his disciples as he takes physical leave of them? The message is phrased differently in the Acts than in the Gospel:

In Acts, **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)”**

In Mark, **“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation. The one who believes and is baptized will be saved; but the one who does not believe will be condemned. (Mark 16:15-18)**

These are the last words of Jesus as recorded Acts and in Mark. Both readings are in agreement that **(a) Jesus gave his disciples a mission, a task to engage them till he returns in glory, and (b) he assured them of divine assistance in the carrying out of this mission.**

The mission is to bear witness to the Good News of Jesus to the ends of the earth, **The universal reach of this mission is very clear. The message of Jesus is meant to be good news in the ears of all irrespective of nationality or culture.**

The spreading of the Good News to all nations is not a goal that can be attained by any human endeavor, and yet we puny and unworthy humans must participate. That is why Jesus promises to empower his messengers from on high by his abiding presence and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Challenge to take up the mission of evangelist is built on the sure promise that we will be sustained by the very presence of God in his spirit.

A spirit pour out on us and into us, through Water and the Holy Spirit, our baptism, where we were invited to participate more fully in his death and resurrection, where we are invited to die to ourselves so that the other might live. The Pascal Mystery!

A baptism made holy in Jesus as water and blood flowed out of His side and on the altar of the world through this cross. And the gift of the Spirit given at Easter tell us that we have all the tools necessary to accomplish the "Great Commission".

What is our Role?

It is the same as always, given to any and all his disciples...to Evangelize, meaning to "Bearing Witness." --To announce Good News!

Bl. Paul VI said that the church exists in order to evangelize. "It is unthinkable that a person should accept the word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn."

St. John Paul said, "the experience of oneness in the Church gives rise to mission and that mission in turn leads to oneness in the Church. The Church knows that the communion received by her as a gift is destined for all people."

This oneness comes from the Eucharist, from the communion with share in Christ as part of his body, we are strengthened and then sent...Missa, the word Mass to be sent!

So why are we standing around looking up at the sky? Why do we remain so afraid in the upper room, or in the safety of our present existence. There is work to be done, and good news to be proclaimed! As today we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord, let us not mourn the disappearance of Christ. Let us rather celebrate his going up into the eternal holy place, And let us busy ourselves with the work of the vineyard, to produce the proper fruits in due season, when the master returns. The faithful disciple, the good steward, does not stand there looking up into the sky (with his finger up his nose). We busy ourselves, with the masters business, to proclaim everywhere his good news and to baptize all into the mysteries of salvation, the passion, death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord. Amen