

Weekly Reflection

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Sunday, June 1, 2025 | Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord | Ascension, Recess, and the Real Mission Begins!

“You are witnesses of these things.”

— Luke 24:48

At our final school Mass before summer break, I tossed out two simple questions to our St. Mary students: “*What did you like most about school this year?*” and “*What are you doing this summer?*” Now, if you think the answers were full of theological depth and saintly aspirations, well... grab a snow cone and think again.

Let’s start with the first question—*What did you like most about St. Mary School?* The top responses? **Recess, snacks, and friends**—a holy trinity of childhood joy. But what warmed my priestly heart (and not just because someone again, turned the A/C thermostat to 80!) was this: student after student said, “*My teachers.*” Over and over again. What a beautiful testament to the vocation of teaching! Right here at St. Mary’s, faith isn’t just taught—it’s lived, modeled, and passed on. You could say we’re building saints with glue sticks and grammar books.

Now, question number two—*What are you doing this summer?* Oh boy. We had it all: visits to “the Mouse” in Florida (Mickey, not a parish rodent—I checked), swimming, camping, and even one proud soul who said, “I’m going to mow grass.” A true suburban missionary. But the overwhelming winner? “**Sleeping in!**” Apparently the only bells they want to hear this summer are *not* from the 8:00 AM class bell. And hey, even Jesus told the disciples to rest a while—so who am I to argue?

Which brings us to this week’s Gospel from **Luke 24:46–53**—Jesus blesses His disciples and is taken up to heaven. But before He goes, He gives them a mission: “*You are witnesses of these things.*” That’s our call too. As we step into summer, it’s not just a vacation from math facts and spelling lists—it’s a new season to live our faith in flip-flops and sunscreen.

So I’ll ask you the same question I asked our students: **What are you doing this summer?** Sleeping in is fine. A little fishing? Perfect. Even a trip to the Magic Kingdom—enjoy! But here’s the real challenge: **Does God get any extra time?** Maybe it’s ten minutes in prayer, a good Catholic book, a family rosary, or helping a neighbor. Because the mission Jesus gave His disciples? It didn’t end at the Ascension—it started there.

And if you’re like me, you’ll be spending part of the summer answering emails that begin with “Father, quick question...” and end somewhere around the Book of Revelation, trying to figure out who keeps resetting the church sign to say “Taco Tuesday,” and dodging invitations to “just stop by for a minute” that mysteriously last three hours and involve moving furniture. It’s the kind of pastoral cardio they never warned us about in seminary. Pray for your pastor—he’s fueled by grace, coffee, and whatever baked goods show up in the office unannounced.

In all seriousness, our students remind us what joyful, authentic faith looks like. They laugh loudly, sing off-key, ask big questions, and hug hard. May we carry that same spirit into the summer—less stress, more joy, and yes, maybe a nap or two. After all, even saints need siesta.

Sunday Homily

Reverend Steven M. Pautler



Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, June 1, 2025 – Cycle C

Acts 1:1–11, Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9, Hebrews 9:24–28; 10:19–23, Luke 24:46–53

Title: “You Can’t Miss Him”

After a lifetime of driving modest cars that blended right into the parking lot, I now drive a truck. Not just any truck—but a bright, bold, Cyber Orange truck. You can’t miss it. Trust me.

A few nights ago, I parked it in a garage at the Fox Theatre in St. Louis. As I rolled down the window, the attendant smiled and said, “Father, you got a new truck!” And just a few days later, someone after Mass asked, “Did you enjoy Riverdance?” I said, “Yes, I did—how did you know I was there?” They grinned and said, “We saw your truck.” You can’t hide a truck like that.

And that got me thinking. There’s something about presence—about being seen. About how, without even saying a word, people know you’re there. That’s how it was with Jesus. He didn’t sneak around Galilee trying not to be noticed. Wherever He went, people knew. The blind called out. The lepers ran to him. Crowds pressed in. He was unmistakable. You couldn’t miss Him.

But today, we mark a turning point. In the Gospel, Jesus ascends into heaven. The visible becomes invisible. He blesses His disciples and rises out of their sight. And just like that—He’s gone... or is He?

No. He is not gone. He is not hiding. He is not absent.

The Ascension doesn’t mean that Jesus has vanished—it means His presence has multiplied. He is no longer limited to one town, one street, one group of followers. Now, He is everywhere. Present to us all. He is seated at the right hand of the Father—and yet, He is still walking beside you in your everyday life.

But we forget that sometimes, don’t we? We think, If only I could see Him... If only I could touch His robe like they did... If only I had been there. But the truth is: you are there. Right now. He is here. And you can see Him—if you’re looking with the eyes of faith.

He is there in the sacraments—the Eucharist, the anointing, the confessional, the baptismal font. He is there in the kindness of a stranger, the quiet peace in prayer, the hug from a child, the courage to forgive, the strength to carry on. He is there in the joy of community, in the beauty of creation, and yes—even in the middle of your suffering.

So the next time you see that Cyber Orange truck in the church lot, you might say, “Father Steve must be here.” But let that be your reminder of something greater. Jesus is here, too. No longer in a robe and sandals—but in glory, in power, and in love that will never leave us.

He told the disciples: “You are witnesses of these things.” And He tells us the same. Go out, live like He’s real, because He is. You may be the only “orange truck” someone sees—some sign that Christ is near. So don’t blend in. Be seen. Be bold. Be unmistakable.

Because Jesus didn’t leave us behind.
He went ahead to prepare the way.
And if you’re watching, if you’re listening, if you’re looking with hope...

You can’t miss Him.