

Homily Rerun: May 28, 2017 - Fr. Seno



My dear people of Peace, we celebrate today the solemnity of the Ascension of Lord into Heaven. This celebration marks the completion of the Paschal Mystery, the mystery of our redemption: His Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. The work of our redemption is accomplished! This Paschal Mystery is the central point that St. Luke communicates in our First Reading (Acts 1:1-11), saying, "In the first book... I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up." We immediately see why the Church teaches that "revelation is realized by deeds and words" (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 2). Christ revealed the Kingdom of God and how we can gain access into it. He wants us to be in communion with Him in heaven for all eternity. The Ascension was a historical event; Christ "was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight." The disciples stood "looking at the sky." Christ transcended beyond our "physical" sight. He is now glorified and has received a name above every name. In the words of our Second Reading (Eph 1:17-23), God has shown "the exercise of His great might... 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." It is the will of the Father that "all may honor [worship] the Son, even as they honor the Father" (John 5:23).

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Beloved, though Christ ascended into heaven, He did not abandon us. In our Gospel passage (Mt 28:16-20), He commissioned His Church to care for us, saying, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." However, this mission could not begin without the empowerment by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. "He enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father... in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Then, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This means that the Church cannot function without the Holy Spirit. We need God's power to do God's work according to God's will. As we can see, the Church is not of human origin and is not constituted by any human institution or authority (cf. John 1:12-13). Thus, the focus of the Church is not human opinions or preferences; it is the will of God, "all that Christ has commanded." Also, the Church's power and authority is universal, "to all nations." No other permission is required from any country or government for the Church to exist; the permission is already granted by Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth; "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1Tim 6:15; Rev 19:16). The Word of God will prevail. Let us never relent! "Lift High the Cross, the Love of Christ proclaim, till all the world, adore His Sacred Name." My dear friends, we cannot prevail on our own; each year, we relive Pentecost and receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit anew. Christ told the early Christians "not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father." They obeyed. After the Ascension, "they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet... they went up to the upper room... [and] with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers" (Acts 1:12-14).

My dear friends, at the Ascension, we received this angelic message: "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." Few years ago, as it has happened in the past, we heard some speculations of His return or of the end of the world. Notice in our First Reading, Christ dismissed such misguided speculations. The apostles asked, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Christ responded, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority." Jesus already hinted: "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). Are these misguided Christians and the Jehovah Witnesses doubting Christ's integrity? Who do you trust on this: Christ or "them"? On the whole, in this world, there are disasters and uncertainties: financial meltdown, tornadoes, tsunamis, nuclear crises, terrorism, wars, diseases, etc. Life on earth is very precarious; no condition is permanent. Christ's Ascension teaches us to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God... not... things that are on earth" (Col 3:1-2). Christ says, "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 14:3). What a blessing for those saints who have shared in the First Resurrection! (cf. Rev 20:5-6). What a blessed hope for us my brothers and sisters on our pilgrim journey!

Finally, St. Paul, in our Second Reading, prays: "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...." Amen!