

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

We celebrate today the solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven.

The Ascension marks the time that Jesus no longer visibly appears to his disciples.

After the forty days of Easter a new period has begun where the disciples themselves are fully in charge of the flock of Jesus.

To be able to take full care of his flock we see Jesus, in the first reading, instructing the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the 'baptism of the Holy Spirit',

The gifts of the Holy Spirit will enable the disciples to be Christ's witnesses "to the ends of the earth". The Holy Spirit will help them to communicate Jesus wherever they find themselves. The Holy Spirit will make their work possible.

In the gospel reading Jesus commissions his eleven disciples and gives them the task of spreading the Gospel to all nations.

"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."

The disciples are sent to go and make disciples. The question I would like to ask here is "Who is a disciple?" I know there are many answers to this question but let us settle on this one. A disciple, it is said, is one who listens to Jesus and learns from him how to live, how to pray and how to do what is pleasing to the Father.

As Christians we are all disciples. Don't we listen to Jesus? Don't we learn from him how to live, pray and do what is pleasing to God?

Our Christian discipleship begins with baptism in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We can say that by virtue of our baptism our life is dedicated to the Trinity.

Along with baptism, we are to be instructed in the teachings of Jesus. That is, as the people who have dedicated to the Trinity the gospel is meant to give shape and direction to our entire life.

We should remember that our Christian discipleship is a total way of life, a life-long commitment to model our daily actions and decisions after the example set by Christ and his followers.

What we should know is that as disciples we are not left to rely on our own strength as we live our Christian life. We have Jesus himself to help us. He tells us in today's gospel reading that, "**Behold I am with you always, until the end of the age**". Christ is always with us, a presence we can depend upon and draw upon.

Let us always keep in mind that as disciples (Christians) we are commissioned to make disciples. We are all missionary disciples. All of us are called to offer others an explicit witness to the saving love of the Lord. We are to help them to listen to Jesus and learn from him how to live, pray and do what is pleasing to God.

As we celebrate today the continuing presence of Christ in our midst as well as his glorification with the Father let us pray for the a deeper awareness of the Holy Spirit within us to make us recognize Christ's presence in our lives so that we may be the face of Christ to others; for his Ascension is our mission

Apart from making Jesus known through the witness of our words and actions, wherever we find ourselves we are also called to support the Church's missionary activities both financially and prayerfully.