

## **EASTER VII [A] SUNDAY**

**(USE THIS on Sunday when Ascension is celebrated on THURSDAY; for Ascension Sunday, see the next homily)**

**Introduction:** Our central challenge from the Holy Spirit in today's readings is, with His grace, to rejoice in our sufferings for the Faith. For the more we suffer, the more we are identified with Jesus who has liberated us from the bondage of sin by his suffering and death.

**Scripture readings summarized:** Today's first reading tells us how the apostles waited in prayer for the coming of the Spirit Who would enable them to preach and bear witness to Christ in spite of persecutions. In the second reading, Peter challenges his early Christian audience, and us, to view and accept suffering as an opportunity to be more fully one with Jesus. The Gospel gives us the beginning of the "*High Priestly Prayer*" in which Jesus prays for himself and for protection and unity for his disciples. In the first part of the section, Jesus prays for himself and his chosen apostles. He prays for the protection and unity of his disciples. In the second part, Jesus commends his apostles to the Father and prays for them because they have accepted the word of God and acknowledged his Divine origin as the Messiah. They have put their trust in Jesus and His Father. Jesus prays that they may act as agents of truth and love in the world, that they may be protected from evil, and that they may be one.

**Life messages: 1) We need to center our Christian life on prayer.** Christian prayer has forms for individual Christians and for communities. These include individual prayer, the prayer of the liturgy, and para-liturgical prayers/services, such as Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. There are also different kinds of prayer, including vocal prayers, the Rosary, and contemplative prayer. In the final analysis, prayer means getting into contact with God -- listening to Him and talking to Him. We should try to set aside some time each day to spend with God in prayer. If we are convinced of the presence of God within us, we can talk to Him even while we are driving, waiting in line, or doing routine work in the kitchen or yard. Our talk with God can include praise and thanksgiving, pleas for forgiveness and prayer for our needs. A few minutes spent in reading the Bible is a good way of listening to God.

**2) We need to glorify Christ by the lives we live.** When we live ethical lives, that is, lives of integrity in which our performance is in harmony with our profession of Faith, we are glorifying Jesus. An honest day's work for an honest day's pay, a fair deal on a product, a truthful, trustworthy guarantee – all these reflect our integrity. We glorify God by our prayer-life and our faithful observance of the Lord's Day. We glorify Jesus by humble and selfless service to Him in our brothers and sisters – distributing lunches to the homeless begging on the street corner, volunteering at homeless shelters, tutoring children, helping with after-school care, teaching Vacation Bible School, or doing random acts of kindness. Finally, we glorify God by speaking kind, merciful, loving and encouraging words.

**FR. ANTONY K.**

### **THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD [A]**

**Introduction:** Today's readings describe the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into his Heavenly glory after promising to send the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles as the source of Heavenly power and commanding them to bear witness to Him through their lives and preaching throughout the world. But the ascended Jesus is still with us because of His promise, *"I am with you always; yes, to the end of time"* (Mt 28-20). He is with us at all times and in all places, releasing a new energy upon the earth, the energy of the Holy Spirit.

**The Scripture lessons summarized:** The first reading, taken from the Acts of the Apostles, presents the scene of Jesus' Ascension, the promise of the Holy Spirit, his instructions to the apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the Power from above, and the missionary command to the apostles to bear witness to him. Today's Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 47) suggests that, by his Ascension, the risen Lord *"mounts his throne"* in glory. In the second reading, Paul teaches us that God revealed His might in the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ and in exalting Jesus over all angelic forces. Jesus remains accessible to us now in the life-giving Holy Spirit, assuring us that one day we, too, will be ascending to Heavenly glory, provided that, with His grace, we live out our Faith in Him through the mission of loving service He entrusts to us. Today's Gospel tells us that, with his return to the Father, Jesus completed his mission on earth. But just before his Ascension, Jesus entrusted to the disciples the mission of

preaching the Good News and evangelizing the whole world by bearing witness to him through their lives. It is in his Ascension that we see Jesus entering fully into the life and glory of God. In the descriptions of Christ after his Resurrection, we are given a hint of what life will be like in Heaven. The prospect of sharing that glory should be the driving force of our lives.

**Life messages:** **1) We need to be proclaimers and evangelizers:** To be a Christian is to be a proclaimer and an evangelizer. There is a difference between preaching and proclaiming. We preach with words, but we proclaim with our lives. Let us ask the guidance of the Spirit of God to bear witness to Jesus by our transparent Christian lives.

**2) We have a teaching mission:** Jesus taught us lessons of Faith, Hope, Love, forgiveness, mercy, and salvation by his life and his preaching and gave us this same mission to spread the Word to all our brothers and sisters. Hence, let us learn about Jesus and his teachings through our daily study of the Bible and the teachings of the Church, experience Jesus in personal prayer, our reception of the Sacraments and our works of charity, and convey to others Jesus whom we experience with the help of the Holy Spirit. **3) We need Jesus as our source of strength and encouragement in doing His will:** We will be able to overcome doubts about our Faith and baseless fears, anxieties, and worries by meditating on Jesus' Ascension and the lesson it teaches -- that we, too, are called to share his glory in Heaven.

**FR. ANTONY K.**

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