

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

The Ascension of
the Lord, Year B
May 16, 2021

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Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
Pastor

Our Sunday Masses are now held inside the Church, on Saturdays at 4:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:30 AM.
Please come in a face mask and observe social distancing.

1st Reading: Acts 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." When they had gathered together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly

suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? 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."

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

"God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord."

All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness, For the Lord, the Most High, the awesome, is the great king over all the earth.

R.

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; the Lord, amid trumpet blasts. Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise.

R.

For king of all the earth is God; sing hymns of praise. God reigns over the nations, God sits upon his holy throne.

R.

2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:1-13

Brothers and sisters, I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have

received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says: *He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men.* What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth? The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature to manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

LECTOR: Alleluia, Alleluia.
ALL: Alleluia, Alleluia.
LECTOR: Go and teach all nations, says the Lord; I am with you always, until the end of the world.
ALL: Alleluia, Alleluia.

Gospel Reading: Mark 16:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**The Mystery of Faith:
We proclaim your Death,
O Lord, and profess your
Resurrection, until you
come again.**

REFLECTING ON THE WORD GUIDEPOSTS

Introduction to the Liturgy of the Day

When Jesus ascended to heaven, he commanded his disciples to carry on his ministry, proclaiming the good news to the whole world. Now we are that whole world. Now we are those disciples. Let us pay special attention today to what Jesus tells his disciples, for he is speaking those same words to us. Perhaps then our prayer today can be for ears to hear, and the grace to take on, whatever it is that God is asking us to do. May Christ, whom we encounter as we gather together and receive in the Eucharist on this holy day, strengthen our resolve to spread the good news in our world today.

“Jesus Has Entered Into His Glory But He Is Still With Us.”

The risen Christ has entered into his glory. This is what we are celebrating today. However, this does not mean that he has left this world. The *Ascension* is the biblical way of expressing the end of God’s physical presence in Jesus’ flesh and blood and *Pentecost* which we will celebrate next Sunday, marks the beginning of his presence as a Spirit, in the Church.

Thus, we read in today’s first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, that before Jesus was lifted up, taken by a cloud, he said to the apostles: “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). That they must act only with the guidance of the Holy Spirit is especially made very clear in Luke 24:49-51 where Jesus, before being taken up into heaven, told his disciples: “*I myself will send upon you what my Father has promised. But you must wait in the city until the power from above (the Holy Spirit) comes down upon you*” (Lk 24:49).

The Lord’s Ascension into heaven is pictured as being lifted up and taken by a cloud in order to teach us that our final destiny is not in this world but in the next life, that where Christ went, we will follow.

As important as Christ’s teaching of our heavenly destiny is his abiding presence in our world. He is still very much with us and in each one of us, baptized persons who must continue his work on earth. This is emphasized in Matthew’s Gospel. Rather than picturing Jesus as going up, up and away from us, Matthew’s “Ascension” stresses his continued nearness to us, working with and through us. Matthew ends his Gospel putting Jesus on a mountain with his disciples, where he sends them out saying “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples And I will be with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:19-20).

The abiding presence of the Lord Jesus after he has entered into his glory is a “requirement” of *agape*. Love requires the risen Lord to remain with us.

Many of you may have seen the film *Of Gods and Men*, released in 2011, based on actual events, mainly about 8 French Trappist monks living in a monastery in a small village in Algeria where they tend bees, raise vegetables and provide medical care for their poor Muslim neighbors. The monks preach the Gospel by their example of compassion and respect for the local people. As the country of Algeria is plunged into civil war in the mid-1990s, the monks must decide whether to stay among the impoverished residents who had been their neighbors, or flee the encroaching fundamentalist terrorists. Each must decide for himself what God is calling him to do. The villagers plead with them, saying, “If you leave, we will lose our footing.” The people picture themselves as “the birds” and the monks as “the branch” on which they rest.

The image reminds us of Jesus saying, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” After much prayer and dialogue, the brothers know what they must do. They celebrate a last supper, clinging to each other for support. When the terrorists come, we moviegoers are spared the sight of the beheading by which the real-life Trappist monks were assassinated. But we are left with a memorable conviction: **Love requires the Brothers to remain.**

”The Great Commission”

Today’s gospel is often referred to as the Great Commission — the commissioning of Christ’s followers to make disciples of all peoples and become his mystical body, the church.

One may ask: So today may be referred to as the birthday of the church? How come that usually we say the Church was born on Pentecost Sunday which we celebrate next Sunday yet?

Let us answer that fully next week. For now the answer may become clear with the help of the following analogy: A song is not a song until somebody sings it. A bell is not a bell until somebody rings it. Love is not love there in your heart to stay. Love is not love till you give it away.

In other words, the Holy Spirit may be in each one of us but we become a church when we listen to the Holy Spirit and allow him to move us and become one community -- the CHURCH — the mystical body of Christ. Christianity is essentially a community religion.

The Acts of the Apostles (first reading), takes note of the presence of “the two men in white” who tell the disciples: “Why are you looking up at the sky? Jesus who has been taken up will come back as you have seen him go” (Acts 1:11). In short, Christ will come again at the end of time.

In the “Interim period,” that is, between his ascension and his return, we are called to live a life of witness to Christ in the world, of establishing “colonies of heaven” **already** here on earth.

In today’s second reading (Ephesians 4:1–13), St. Paul urges us to “live in a manner worthy of the call you have received.” The qualities needed to respond to this call are— among others, humility, gentleness, patience, a desire for unity, peace, and hope.

Within each of us lies the ability to manifest the love and compassion shown by Jesus throughout his life. The small and simple gestures we make to live with and love one another are Christ in action.

This is a good day to reflect on the words of St. Teresa of Avila, a doctor of the Church: Christ has no body but yours. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good, Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands; yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes; you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours.

A man was speeding down the freeway, keeping pace with a dozen other speeding cars. When they passed a speed trap, the man got nailed by an infrared speed detector. A highway patrol car took chase and soon pulled him over to the side of the freeway. After the usual ticketing procedure, the officer handed the man a citation, received his signature and was about to go away when the man asked, “Officer, I know I was speeding, but I don’t think it’s fair---there were a dozen other cars around me that were going just as fast, so why did I get the ticket?” “Ever go fishing?” the policeman asked. “Yes,” the man replied. The officer grinned back. “Ever catch ‘all’ the fish?”

Let us pray for one another, especially for **Gordon Osborne, Amelia Lopez Ortiz, and Susan Muñoz,** that God may restore them to health.



“We should pray as if everything depended on God and act as if everything depended on ourselves.”

– St. Augustine.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Celebrant:

Let us turn now to God with our needs and the needs of our neighbors all around the world.

Lector:

1) For the Church, that we may never lose sight of Jesus’ final command to his disciples: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature,” let us pray to the Lord.

2) That we may work together to build the unity Jesus envisions, drawing all peoples together into a community that values justice, life, and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

3) For all those who were initiated into the Church this Easter season, that they may bear witness to Christ’s influence in their lives by the way that they live, let us pray to the Lord.

4) For priests and deacons, religious sisters and brothers, and all who spread the gospel and teach the faith, building up the body of Christ, let us pray to the Lord.

5) That our parish community may proclaim the Good News in the way that we minister to those in need, let us pray to the Lord.

6) For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Heavenly Father, guide us in bearing witness to you in the way that we treat each other, in the way that we treat the stranger, in the way that we treat all people. Hear the prayers we make through your Son, who sits at your right hand in glory, now and forever. Amen.

A Message from Bishop McElroy:

It is vitally important that all of us receive the Covid vaccine. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson are safe and effective. They are fully approved for use at this moment by the teachings of our Church. And as Pope Francis has so clearly taught, receiving the vaccine is not only for ourselves as individuals. It is for everyone that we treasure, to keep them safe and healthy and bring back the joy of life to us all.

..... The sooner we are all vaccinated, the sooner we will be able to return to the many joys of our lives that we have missed during this past year of suffering. The vaccines, with our continued masking and social distancing during the coming months, will bring this hateful pandemic to an end.”



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\$ 1,295.00

Via Online: May 5 to May 11:
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