

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD—YEAR A

Christ who dwelt with the Father from all eternity entered the world, taking up the role of a servant. He faithfully accomplished the mission the Father entrusted to Him, giving up His life. His Father did not let Him remain in the tomb. He raised Him up.

Today we celebrate the crowning of Easter victory over sin and death. We celebrate Christ's return to His father.

It is not Christ's departure that is the focus of our attention today. Rather, it is the final message of Christ that is given for our reflection today. "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. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the ages."

The first part of the message is the *mandate* to spread his message. Jesus gives His disciples a task to engage in until His return. They are given a mission to make disciples of all nations.

The Gospel has no boundaries. It cuts across every language and every culture. I have not heard anyone saying that the message of Christ does not appeal to European culture or African culture or Asian culture or Middle Eastern culture. It appeals to every human person.

The Feast of Ascension is passing on the baton. Two thousand years ago, on the day of the Ascension, Jesus passed on the baton of His work to His disciples. They, in turn, passed it on to the people who came after them and they, in turn, passed it on to us. And now it is our turn to pass it on to others. If you have a family, this task begins with passing on the faith diligently to your kids. Evangelization becomes so easy if every parent takes this mandate of Christ seriously and does their best to practice and pass on their faith to their kids.

Our mission is to bear witness to Christ. We can either proclaim Christ or deny Christ by our lives. In everything we do and say, we are either proclaiming

Christ or denying him. Christ chose tax collectors, sinners, fisherman, tent makers and physicians as His disciples. They were not perfect. Therefore, never wait to become perfect to begin to preach the Gospel by your lives and by your words. Let your weakness not be a stumbling block in preaching the Gospel. It will be most effective if we can preach the Gospel and



live it to the full as well. If unable, do not get discouraged. Christ can work even through your weaknesses.

There was a lady who used to go to the open public well and bring home water in pots. Both of her pots were cracked, and by the time she reached home, half of the pots were empty. She was very poor so she could not replace the pots.

Others taunted her and called her "Crack Pot lady." She was very discouraged until someone pointed out to her the all the plants with beautiful flowers that grew on both sides of the footpath because of the water that fell out through the cracks in her pots. Sun shines through the cracks. Our weakness can sometimes strengthen someone else.

Have you heard someone saying, "My dad left me when was young, and I do not want that to happen to my kids." Let not your weakness nor that of others discourage you from preaching the Gospel and bearing witness to Jesus.

After attending a convention led by Billy Graham, a woman wrote to him: "Dear Sir, I feel that God is calling me to preach the Gospel. But the trouble is that I have 12 children. What shall I do?" The televangelist replied: "Dear Madam, I am delighted to hear that God has called you to preach the Gospel. I am more delighted to hear that He has provided you with a congregation."

The second part of the final message of Christ is the *assurance* of His assistance at all times in our efforts to live the Gospel and to preach the Gospel. "I will be with you always, until the end of the ages." In the first reading, Jesus tells His disciples, "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." Jesus promises his assistance through the Holy Spirit. There is no way we can live and preach the Gospel without that assistance. He has promised His presence and assistance always. We just have to trust and seek it.

Every night during his Papacy, Pope John XXIII would review the happenings of the day. Then before he went to bed he used to say, "Lord, the Church is yours. I have done my best for the day. I am going to bed." Christ is not far away. He is in us and is living through us. Therefore, let us be the presence of Christ today in our families and in the places where we live and work. I would like to invite Leigh to share his faith journey.