

7th SUNDAY OF EASTER (Matthew 28:16-20) ASCENSION OF THE LORD

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD

Jesus appeared brilliantly victorious,
Totally relaxed, his face seemed luminous.
He had faithfully accomplished His mission,
And He gave the apostles the commission.

From the world and his friends, Jesus should now depart,
He had the apostles already set apart-
To continue his works, spreading them far and wide.
The Holy Spirit would be their unfailing guide.

They now clearly understood their vocation,
And would not be blinded by their ambition.
They accepted challenges of the gospel,
Wherever they went; good tidings they would tell.

Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit,
The Sanctifier who would keep high their spirit.
Empowered by the Spirit, they'd never turn back,
With their martyrdom, they would face every attack.

He is now eager to go back to His Father,
And to prepare a special place for His mother.
The apostles looked on as He went up to heaven,
From there He will send us down divine blessings like rain.

The apostles' eyes were filled with tears of joy,
As they remained standing looking at the sky.
His departure in their hearts caused a vacuum,
Through preaching they will dispel sadness and gloom.

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some challenges that you have in your life?
2. What blessings are you most grateful for?

REFLECTIONS:

The gospel of this Ascension Sunday begins, "But the eleven disciples went into Galilee." "Eleven" immediately reminds us of Judas' betrayal. Where there were twelve apostles, now there are eleven.

Jesus takes this imperfect number and gives it a perfect vocation. But the Christ, who began good works with the eleven disciples, is continuing it with us. The disciples went to Galilee. Jesus was born in the shadow of Jerusalem but Joseph and Mary took him to Galilee after their return from Egypt because of their fear of Archelaus. Jesus, therefore, grew up in a remote area, far from the Temple. Most of Jesus' ministry took place in Galilee, and he returns there after his resurrection to commission his disciples. When they saw Him, they bowed down to him but some doubted. This is the first time in this gospel that we find the disciples together since Jesus was arrested, and the disciples deserted him. Only Mary Magdalene and the other Mary have seen the risen Christ. We can only guess at the disciples' state of mind as they proceed toward the mountain, but we know what happens when they finally see Jesus: "They bowed down to him, but some doubted." It is certainly fitting that the disciples should worship Jesus. They know that He was executed and buried. They know that Good Friday appeared to be the end. But now they see Jesus alive again, confirming beyond a doubt that He is the Messiah. They see with their own eyes that their teacher is Lord of life, exercising power even over death.

MAY 17, 2026



**MESSAGE
FROM
FR. ANTONY**

With Jesus' death, their hopes were dashed. The apostles were shattered by this loss, and they scattered, believing their future was truly bleak, and their lives were over. They went into hiding in fear for their lives, as they expected to experience the same fate as their Master. They knew they had to start their lives all over again but did not know where or how to begin. While they were still thinking of their homes, families, and children, Mary brought the good tidings: HE IS RISEN. This immediately changed everything for the better. Suddenly, they had something to live for and someone in whom they could place their hope. While Jesus was with them, though they were physically together, emotionally they were not united, as each of them had ambitiously sought special positions and power, bickering, and complaining often. Peter went through a real conversion after he had denied Jesus, and he was no longer impetuous in his words or actions. Judas, the only non-Galilean among the group, who had betrayed Jesus for thirty silver coins, repented unto himself but was overcome by guilt and hung himself. With him dead, the apostles' finances were safer, and there was no more fear of anyone stealing money from their common fund. Judas had the weakness of helping himself to the money, and this was not a secret. Now, there was a special bond of love and friendship among the apostles that had never existed before. They began to treat one another with much more love, trust, and respect. Some of them had harbored resentment against the brothers John and James for quietly seeking special positions with Jesus. They needed a reconciliation. Human as they were, they did suffer from jealousy.

Jesus' death and resurrection marked a new beginning for them. The time Jesus spent with them after His resurrection had a great impact on them. With undivided attention, their hearts were set on fire. The profession of faith that doubting Thomas made, "My Lord and my All," echoed as though all of them had professed the same creed. Thomas had refused to believe his companions, who told him that they had seen the Lord. He stubbornly refused to accept it by saying that unless he touched the wounds on Jesus' body made by the nails, he would not believe. One day, Jesus appeared to them and asked Thomas to put his fingers into the holes. Thomas learned his lesson the hard way but he would never forget it. He died a martyr in India for his faith. James who, with his brother John, wanted special position and power, was the first to die for Jesus. Likewise, everyone else, except John, the favorite of Jesus, laid down their lives proudly for their Master and were thus adequately compensated for their lack of faith and courage at the time Jesus was arrested. Peter, realizing that he was not worthy to die the way his Savior died, at his request, was granted permission to be crucified upside down.

Jesus was having His last meeting with the apostles before He would leave them forever. He gave them His final instructions, telling them how they should carry on with their mission. He asked them not to leave Jerusalem until the day the Holy Spirit would come down upon them. He commissioned them to go throughout the whole world and proclaim the gospel. They were going to be His witnesses in the world and would continue the mission Jesus began with them. The Church, built on the apostles, has continued to this day, surviving many storms including divisions, dissidence, and spiritual wars. Even though the Church has encountered many obstacles, accepted many challenges and suffered countless insults and accusations, she continues still to be the largest organization in the world in terms of membership. As a matter of fact, the Catholic Church is the only organization that has remained under the same management for the last two thousand years. Even though her members may not all be holy and some of them have even scandalized the world through their imprudent and unacceptable behaviors, the Church remains holy still. Despite the many human imperfections that swept the Church through the ages, she has produced many holy men and women. Some of them, through their canonization, have publicly proclaimed to the world the dedication to sanctity in their lives and still many others have reached perfection in their holiness, even though they are not officially recognized by the Church.

As Jesus was still talking to the apostles, He was lifted up, and the cloud carried Him from their sight. They kept gazing at the sky as He ascended to His Father. Sadness pervaded the place, and the apostles looked downcast as they experienced emptiness in their hearts. As they were still trying to figure out how they were going to deal with Jesus' departure, two men dressed in white garments stood by their side and 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." They then went back to their place and began in true earnestness the mission of Jesus. Thus, the slow learning and rustic men of Galilee began their journey of commitment to proclaim Jesus and His gospel to all corners of the world. By their lives and example, they proved one thing beyond any doubt: that God does not call the qualified but qualifies those He calls. God does not need men and women of highly intellectual quality. He rather chooses the humble and the simple, who are pliable in His hands. In his final commissioning, it is important to note what Jesus includes and does not include in this commissioning. He doesn't command the disciples to preach, to evangelize or to win the world. He charges them with the responsibility of making new disciples, a new people of faith. If we fail to take the Great Commission seriously, we will wither and die. Disciples who fail to take it seriously tend to be sterile and produce no spiritual offspring. By virtue of our baptism, all of us have received this mandate from Jesus. Jesus has not given us a backup plan. It is our call to make Him known by making more and more disciples of Him.