

## The Ascension Cycle A 2023

Jesus' incarnation, His ministry, preaching, death, resurrection, ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit, make up God's plan of salvation of the world. His resurrection, ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit, are part of one continuous event, **which we celebrate as three separate feasts**. We, therefore, cannot speak of one without reference to the other two.

What happened at the ascension? Jesus returned to the Father without shedding his human form, which made him look physically like us, but also limited his ability to be in more than one place at a time. The upside is when God looks upon our weak and fragile nature; he sees the face of his beloved Son.

The Holy Spirit is like the spiritual internet which is able to handle thousands of calls (prayers) at the same time.

Because of our limited understanding, God has to use symbols to reveal what he is doing. In the ancient world, people believed God resided in the high places, like mountain tops and the skies. With the advent of space travel and rockets, we may mistakenly read in the ascension story that heaven is located in a far away galaxy. Heaven probably lies in a different dimension other than the three that we can comprehend. If Jesus had simply vanished by going to another dimension, the apostles would have been unable to interpret what had happened. Because Jesus chose to ascend to the skies before he vanished, and as the apostles believed that heaven was in the skies, they correctly interpreted that he returned to the Father.

Redemption of the world must be followed by its transformation. The ascension is also about God leaving this world in one form, the incarnate Son, so that his presence may continue to be with us in a different form, the Holy Spirit. He

promised to be with us always. Transformation must come from within. Mankind must freely choose to transform itself through love. God will never force us to love him and to love others.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the angels reminded the apostles that Jesus would return. Implied in this statement is the need to start the mission he entrusted to them. They were to stop looking up idly at the sky and start their mission.

The Gospel reminds us of our mission – to make disciples of all nations in the name of Jesus. Most Catholics believe that they are only required to attend Mass on Sunday to be assured of their salvation. The failure to carry out the mission of Christ which he entrusted to us, will result in our exclusion from paradise. Our mission to make disciples of Christ includes the preaching of the Gospel by words and showering them with love by acts of loving kindness. In Matthew's gospel, chapter 25, Jesus said to those who were faithful: Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. *"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was ill and you took care of me; I was in prison and you came to visit me"*.

When they asked when did they do these things, he said *"Whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me"*.

It is our duty and responsibility to care for the poor and needy, as well as to spread the Gospel by word and deed, and to bring "fallen away" Catholics back to their Church.