

THE 7TH SUNDAY IN EASTER

Ascension of the Lord

The Ascension of the Lord can seem like a strange feast. Jesus rises into heaven, and the disciples are left standing there, staring upward. But the Ascension is not Jesus leaving His mission behind; it is Jesus handing His mission over to us. Right before He ascends, Jesus gives one final command: “Go and make disciples.” In other words: go and help others find their way to heaven. And maybe that is the clearest way to understand the Catholic life. Today, Jesus does not disappear from the world — He opens heaven to the world. The Ascension reminds us that heaven is real, that Christ has gone before us, and that our lives are meant to move toward eternity. Jesus ascends not to distance Himself from humanity, but to draw humanity upward to where He is. And if heaven is truly our destination, then the greatest act of love is helping another person get there too.

I recently heard a short, simple, but deeply moving story. A child asked their parent, “Why do you pray for me so much? Why do you care so much if I stay close to God?” And the parent answered, “Because you may be the only thing I can take to heaven with me — God willing.” That changes everything. At the end of your life, you will not stand before God holding your bank account, your degrees, your career, your trophies, or your possessions. None of those things can cross the threshold of eternity. But souls can. The people you loved, the people you prayed for, the people you sacrificed for, and the people you led closer to God — those are the treasures that last forever. That is why Jesus ascends today and sends His disciples — sends us — into the world.

Christianity was never meant to remain inside the walls of the Upper Room with only the 12 apostles. The Gospel was always meant to spread outward — into homes, schools, workplaces, hospitals, neighborhoods, and families. The people God places in our lives are not there by accident; their souls matter to Him. Parents, your mission is not simply to raise successful children. Your mission is to raise saints. One day, your children will stand before God forever, and your prayers, your example, your sacrifices, and even your tears will matter more than you can possibly imagine. Grandparents, never underestimate the power of your quiet prayers. Friends, never underestimate the witness of your faithfulness. Because the truth is, some people may never read the Bible, but they will read your life. Some people may never walk into a church, but they will walk into your life — and encounter you. And through you, they will begin deciding what they believe about Jesus Christ.

That is an overwhelming responsibility. But it is also an incredible privilege. Maybe your forgiveness will keep someone from despair. Maybe your invitation will bring someone back to confession after twenty years away. Maybe your faithfulness in suffering will convince someone that God is real. Maybe your kindness, at exactly the right moment, will save a soul from giving up. Jesus says today: “You will be my witnesses.” Not simply with words, but with lives that look different. And yet one of the greatest spiritual dangers is assuming we still have time. We wait to change. We wait to forgive. We wait to pray seriously. We wait to become the disciples we know we are called to be. The Ascension reminds us that the mission is now.

There are people in your life today carrying burdens you cannot see. There are children learning what faith looks like by watching you. There are wounded souls silently searching for hope. And God, in His providence, placed you in their lives for a reason. Do not waste that calling. The saints lived with eternity in mind. They understood that every act of charity, every prayer, every sacrifice, and every conversation could echo forever in another person’s soul. And perhaps, when we stand before Christ, the question will not be how successful we were ... Perhaps the question will simply be: “Who did you bring with you?” Because at the end of everything, the greatest gift we can offer Christ ... is the souls we helped lead home to Him.