

## FEELING LOST

Matthew 26:31-35 Ascension Thursday [mystagogy] [R.C.I.A.] Deacon Collins

Did you ever feel lost? This is a common experience we all share. The loss of a loved one. The loss of a job. The loss of security leads to isolation and loneliness. When we have a loss it leads to uncertainty, doubt and a time of fear. Where do I turn? Where is my future? This is caused by our desire to be self-reliant, independent, and at times our own invincibility. When these feelings are threatened we panic. How can we be rescued?

These are certainly the feelings the Apostles had at the crucifixion when they ran away. Again at the Ascension of the Lord they felt a great loss at what they perceived as a permanent parting and being on their own. Once again our Gospel reminds us of the final moment in Jesus life among men at His ascension into heaven. Many things have happened since our Lord was born in Bethlehem and worshiped by the Magi and the shepherds. We have gone with Him all through the land of Palestine as He preached the kingdom of God and went about doing good to all. Later we shared the days of His passion and suffering; seeing Him falsely accused, ill treated and crucified. But our sorrow gave way to joy and enlightenment in the resurrection.

But like the Apostles we also are still weak and fearful. We are like the Apostles who asked "Lord at this time will you restore the kingdom of Israel?" This was a sign of doubt. "Lord is it now that we can expect all our weaknesses and anxiety to vanish forever?" A sign of uncertainty. The Lord answered by saying "I will send you another paraclete" and then He left. He ascended to heaven. Consequently the Apostles and we, remain partially perplexed and partially saddened at His departure. It was not easy to get used to His absence because His presence was their security. In an excess of His love for us He remains with us even when He has gone away; for He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. We hear His voice in scripture. We experience His way of acting, of looking, of smiling, of doing good, as we understand the gospel stories of His experiences and His ministry.

Even though He ascends to the Father in heaven we can still be with Him in the breaking of the bread and in His words of scripture. For he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. He who keeps my commands is the one who loves me. To drink my blood is not just a

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matter of consuming consecrated wine [precious blood] but as Jesus asked James and John [Mark 10:39-40] when they wanted to sit at His right and left in the kingdom; “can you drink of the cup that I shall drink?” Jesus was referring to the cup of suffering and death He was to undergo for the love of the Father. That is what is asked of us today; can we truly live a Christian life for love of God?

Jesus has left us but He sends us the Holy Spirit to direct and sanctify our soul. The actions of the Holy Spirit confirms that at Jesus’ departure we did not fall back into bondage, but have been adopted as children of God. As children of God we assumed the role of apostle for we have been grafted into Christ; made one with Him in Baptism. We have been chosen to serve God by our activity in this world and called to help others in their journey to God by our witness; by our words; by our example; by prayer and by atonement.

As children of God it requires us not only to seek our own holiness but also to go out into all of the ways of the world to help other souls overcome obstacles and lead them to the Lord. We are now the leaven and the yeast of faith. The Ascension of Jesus passes on to us a great mission, to help the Holy Spirit redeem the world for Christ by the charity of helpfulness. We are being sent, as Jesus was sent by the Father, to inform all sinners of God’s mercy and salvation. We ourselves need to trust in the mercy of God more and more every day; not by presumption but by faith and good works.

The responsibility that Jesus leaves to us as His witnesses implies that we behave according to His doctrine and the struggle is not easy. We must act in a way that others will be able to say; this person is a Christian. He does not hate; he is not a fanatic; he is willing to make sacrifices to show he is a person of peace and knows how to love. You can see that the role of apostle is demanding but at the same time it is sublime. It is charity and charity is more than giving, it is also understanding. Our apostleship has to be based on understanding. In the Lord’s ascension He has given us the world as an inheritance. Our inheritance requires us to be present in all honest pursuits; to sew the good seed of brotherhood, forgiveness and peace. Never to consider yourself anyone’s enemy.

The ascension also reminds us of another fact. The same Jesus who left us to carry out our tasks in this world, awaits at the gates of heaven for us

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as well. He reminds us that we do not have a permanent dwelling place here but we seek and welcome the home that is yet to come. Our Lord does not expect us to be unhappy in our life on earth; to await only a reward in heaven. He wants us to be happy on earth too, but with a desire for heaven where only He can give total happiness. We have happiness here in our Eucharist, the body of Christ which is our strength and a foretaste of heaven. While we are citizens of this earth in the midst of difficulties, injustices and lack of understanding, we are also citizens of heaven which is being in the midst of joy, serenity and peace. It comes from knowing we also can be assumed into heaven as children of God. This is accomplished by our perseverance in charity, prayer and understanding.

The next nine days between Ascension and Pentecost are considered as a time when the Apostles spent it in prayer and quiet. Jesus had departed and the Holy Spirit had not yet descended. This period of time, called a Novena, has come to designate a special time of prayer. It is also associated with other special feasts. The Ascension is primarily the exaltation and glorification of Jesus. It is the sign and seal of the ultimate accomplishment of His mission.

So, if you feel lost, take heart. The Holy Spirit will guide you, comfort you and show you the way to recover your confidence. The spirit will guide you on the right path through prayer and humility. The Spirit is the special gift of God's love for us. The Holy Spirit is our JOY! ALLELUIA!