

Ascension Thursday 2008 (A)

LESSON: The Church's Central Mission

We don't think enough about the Ascension. In fact, only those who pray the Rosary seem to think about it at all.

Yet, it is a **crucial part** of Christ's mission and message.

- ✍ It is the **culminating moment**, the finale, the final whistle, the moment in which his victory will be enshrined in heaven for ever.
- ✍ Jesus ascends into heaven as the living sacrifice that will **continue to be the bridge** between God and humanity until the end of time.

His **words** at this moment, therefore, are **critical**.

And what does he say? Two things.

First, **he sums up the message of salvation**.

- ✍ He reminds his Apostles that he had come to earth in order to preach salvation, and then to make it into a reality by his suffering, death, and resurrection.
- ✍ **Only** because of Christ's preaching and passion is it possible for mankind to experience the **salvation** from sin and ignorance that they **desire**, the **peace of soul** that they yearn for.



Second, he **gives his followers a job**. He calls upon them to be **witness** of these things.

- ✍ They will not be able to carry out their witness all by **themselves**, they will need the **Holy Spirit**, and so he promises that at Pentecost they will be "clothed with power from on high."
- ✍ But then they are to go to "**all the nations**" as Christ's witnesses.

So, in the Ascension of our Lord, we come face to face with the **core** of the entire Gospel: Christ's saving message being transmitted to all people through the witness of the Church.

APPLICATION: Our Restlessness Relieved by Witnessing

Bearing witness to Christ, to his **message** and the **power of his goodness**: **this** is our primary mission on earth.

Before he ascended, Jesus didn't say, "Go have a good time; go 'find yourselves'." No! He said, "Go be my **witnesses** to all the nations."

This is the **mission** we have been given. This is what we are supposed **to do**.

Each one of us will do it in a different way.

- ? God calls some to witness as **priests**.
- ? He calls some to **consecrate** their lives as **religious sisters or as full-time missionaries**.
- ? Others are called to be **leaven in the dough of the world**, transforming culture from within, either as humble workers or as great leaders.
- ? **Each** of us he calls to bear witness by the **sincerity, faithfulness, and loving-kindness** with which we live out our normal **responsibilities and relationships**.



Until this mission becomes our highest priority in life, we will experience an interior restlessness that nothing will cure.

- ? We were created to live in **friendship with God**, and that means **sharing in God's projects**.
- ? And his project in this fallen world is "that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all the nations".



Right before Jesus ascended, St Luke tells us, he "raised his hands, and **blessed** them." Then he ascended and his disciples "returned to Jerusalem **with great joy**."

Why were they joyful at Christ's **departure**? Because Christ had revealed to them the **purpose of their lives** - they had a **mission**; their life had **meaning**.

Today, at Holy Communion, let's accept anew our life's mission, so that at the end of this Mass, when I raise my hands asking God's blessing on you, our **restlessness** will be taken up into **joy**.