

*Our Lady of Lourdes*  
The Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord  
May 16, 2010

Readings:

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:17-23

Luke 24:46-53

Fr. Bob

Just as he had tried to prepare them for his death, Christ tried to prepare the disciples for the time when he would disappear from their sight. He tried to get them ready. And according to that first reading, it looks like he failed. It was almost as if they kept looking up into the sky waiting for him to return after he had been lifted up. Messengers were even sent to bring their focus back to earth. The error, that someone could make in that story, despite what he told them, would be the idea that Jesus has left this earth, left his people, and is no longer with us. But that is far from the truth. His appearances to them in the flesh had come to an end. But as he told them, he was going to be present to them in another way through the actions of the Spirit. His presence, his love, his power was something that was going to continue to be part of their lives even if it was going to take a much different form.

That's what we celebrate next week with the Feast of Pentecost. In dramatic fashion, we will be told that his Spirit descended on the crowd and great things began to happen. The Spirit, the presence of God was manifested in many different ways. Pentecost meant that God was going to be faithful to his promise to be with his people, to still be with them, to still accompany them on their journey through their lives. He was simply not going to leave them alone. But his Spirit, his presence, was going to be something that would both show how near he was, but would also give them power. Power to heal, to preach. Power to proclaim the word of God in many different ways and in different languages. As it says in scripture, they would take the word to the ends of the earth, far beyond the geographic boundaries that Jesus himself had touched during his earthly ministry.

The Spirit allows us two things. It gives us the knowledge and the peace that come with it, that God is near and is not far away. God can still be found on this earth and we truly don't have to look far to be able to feel and, in a sense, touch him as we go throughout our lives. But again, it's a Spirit that offered something new to his disciples and to us. He gives us the power, he gives us the ability, he enables us in the best sense, to continue the works that he had begun. He gave them, and he gives us today, the power to continue, to take part, to help complete his ministry and his mission.

In our Gospel he tells them to go forth and make disciples of all the nations and to observe all the things he has commanded. And that part should be just a little bit unsettling to us. Jesus' ascension means a new relationship to our God. He still teaches us. We still have much to learn. There are still many mysteries to uncover.

But at the same time, the relationship is different. We are more than listeners. We are more than students just listening to the teacher. His ascension marks a turning point for all believers. We now have the ability, and we especially now have the responsibility, to go out, in all phases of our lives, and be the teachers, the healers and the proclaimers.