

May 22, 2020

Dear Parishioners,

This Sunday, we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, transferred in most dioceses (including ours) from its usual commemoration on Thursday to Sunday to give it the significance it deserves. The following Sunday we'll celebrate Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. I'd like to reflect on them together since they are so related to each other.

In this Sunday's reading from the Acts of the Apostles 1.1-11, Luke's community declares that Jesus showed himself alive and appeared to the apostles for forty days, thus, the traditional celebration of this feast on the Thursday, 40 days after his resurrection. The 40 days are important because of their connection with so many occurrences in the Jewish scriptures: Noah and the 40 days of the flood and the Jewish wanderings in the desert for 40 years, to name a few. And, of course, Jesus fasts in the desert for 40 days. He promises them that they "will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth." He is then lifted up and taken from their sight. They stand there, awestruck no doubt, until two angelic figures tell them he will return in the same way. So they go back to Jerusalem, praying and choosing Matthias to replace Judas.

In the next chapter of Acts, for the celebration of Pentecost, you'll read their experience of "a noise like a strong driving wind...and tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim." This most amazing occurrence was even more startling to the Jews from all over the known world at that time who heard them speaking in their own languages. The gospel from John 20.19-23 relates another experience when Jesus himself appears to them, wishes them peace and says "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He then breathes on them and declares, "Receive the Holy Spirit." (The homilies during the next two taped Sunday Masses will be helpful in understanding these important feasts!)

We who are believers today obviously live long after Jesus' physical presence in Palestine. And, as Vatican II taught us, we are living in the era of the Holy Spirit whose presence within us was strengthened when we were confirmed. So, if we like Mary and the early followers of Jesus were sent out by Jesus, we might ask ourselves three questions: Who has God sent into my life to guide me, as the Spirit guided those earliest followers? How often do I seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit when I need to make an important decision? To whom among my family or circle of friends might the Spirit be sending me today to share a word of compassion or hope?

Peace to you and our global human family. Sr. Sheral

P.S. Masses will continue to be taped until we can gather in the church to celebrate together. These taped videos are available on the St. Robert's WEB site (<http://www.saintroberts.org>).