

CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

May 20, 2012

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord (Cycle B)



Gospel reading Mark 16:15-20

[To be read aloud]

Jesus said to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

Brief commentary:

This passage is unique to the Gospel of Mark. It is read on the feast of the Ascension because it tells us that Jesus "was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God." Most scholars of the Bible believe that the original Gospel of Mark ended abruptly at 16:8 and that his intention was to invite the readers to step in and take the place of the women at the empty tomb. Nevertheless, the canonically approved Gospel contains the "longer ending" (vv. 9-20) which is believed to have been added by first or second century Christians who felt that Mark should have added it himself. The longer ending includes appearances of the risen Jesus to Mary of Magdala and to the disciples and ends the Gospel more smoothly. The shorter ending that appears in the Bible after today's reading is a fifth century addition to the longer ending and it is preserved in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C.

Today's reading offers three significant messages:

- The Church's early missionaries had nothing to fear, because the ascended Lord was with them in their preaching.
- We are all sent to throw out the demons of selfishness and greed, and to protect others from hatred and disunity.
- Jesus' ascension ends his time on earth but not his presence among us as the risen Christ. The ascension initiates the process of evangelization to all peoples and nations.

For our shared or personal reflection:

After a brief pause for silent reflection share your answers, ideas or feelings.

1. How am I turning towards the needs of others around me?
2. What prevents me from being a messenger of good news in my family, workplace, school or parish?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 2; 156; 161; 183; 434; 659; 670; 699; 977; 1223; 1253-1257; 1507; 1673.