



CATHOLIC CONVERSATIONS ON THE SCRIPTURES

Archdiocese of Miami - Ministry of Christian Formation

May 8, 2016

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Gospel reading Luke 24:46-53 *[To be read aloud]*

Jesus said to his disciples: “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” Then he led them out as far as Bethany, raised his hands, and blessed them. As he blessed them he parted from them and was taken up to heaven. They did him homage and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.

Brief commentary:

The heart of the Christian gospel is that “without ceasing to be God, God the Son became one of us... thought with a human mind, labored with human hands, and with a human heart he loved.” The gospels each bear witness to this reality of God’s entrance into our lives in Jesus, in whom God and humanity are forever united in a bond of indestructible love. Each of the gospels also attests to Jesus’ ‘return’ to the Father from whom he came. Jesus shared in the realities of every earthly life, including our vulnerability and mortality. He shared our struggles, our joys, our lives and our death. By so doing Jesus revealed the profound meaning of human existence, and indeed of all creation. The ascension of Jesus is therefore the fulfillment of the life of Jesus, but it is also his return to infinite life as Lord, now with our redeemed humanity.

In Jesus, “the firstborn from the dead”, the creation begins to return, to ascend in glory, to the glorious presence of God. Indeed, Jesus’ resurrection and giving of the Spirit are associated with this ‘ministry of reconciliation and forgiving’ of sinners... associated with God’s mercy. And even at the culmination of his earthly ministry as the Risen One we find a Jesus who is ‘journeying with his disciples’, who ‘instructs’ them, who ‘blesses’ them, and fills them with such joy and confidence that they waste no time in returning to Jerusalem to bear witness to him by praising the mercies of God among the people. By his ascension, Jesus Christ is present to all, and by his Spirit is the source of new life for all who come to him. By his Spirit he is also the source of power for mission in a world desperately in need of God’s mercy incarnate and active in the members of Christ’s body, the Church. And where Christ “the Head” has gone “his Body” can also hope to go.

Today’s reading offers significant messages:

- The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ was a source of joy, encouragement, hope and energy to his disciples. Christians today experience that same grace that transforms us, gives us new life and energy to be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth.”
- The Ascension is the ‘yes’ of the Father to the total doing of the Son who has ascended “to the right hand of the Father”.
- By his ascension Jesus is now powerfully present to all; and by the grace of his Spirit we are empowered to be his witnesses with our voice and with our lives, continuing his mission on earth.

For our shared or personal reflection:

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

- How do I experience the powerful presence of Jesus Christ in my life?
- What does it mean that Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father?
- How am I a joyful witness of the mercy and grace of God in Christ?

Suggested readings: Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs 659-667