

## Homily on the Lord's Ascension – 2021

[Acts 1:1-11](#) [Eph 1:17-23](#) [Mk 16:15-20](#)

**“where the Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope”**

Dearly beloved, it is a great day for us to gather and celebrate our Lord's Ascension into the heavens. Allow me to begin by quoting from the sacramentary on the preface of the Ascension. *“... Mediator between God and man, judge of the world and Lord of hosts, he ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before.”*

As we speak about the skies today, I am reminded of the stories I heard when I was young. Anytime an aircraft flew over our neighborhood, the older folks would tell us tales about the aircrafts actually entering into heaven and emerging again with all the passengers and their belongings. As a young boy, I always imagined how my first experience of flying would be like. I imagined what it would be like, piercing through the clouds, being enveloped by them bit by bit and wondering what I might see from up there. Whenever I went to “Sunday School” (religious education), and learned of Israel and Jerusalem, I knew they were up there, just some few miles away...it's so great to be a kid.

Friends, today, we have an event that is very much related to being thrown into the air or being flown in an aircraft that goes deep into the clouds; the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ though not into the air but into heaven. The church has always spoken and taught about heaven in terms of the realm of God; that state of being that put God over and beyond matter and space. It is for this reason that God is omnipresent and all the other descriptions we can think of.

The verb “to ascend” means to rise or move to a higher point, degree or rank; to proceed from an inferior position to a superior one. To move or slope upwards as opposed to going downwards. The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven has so many implications for us. We would do well to reflect on just a few:

1. In the first place, Christ, ascending into heaven is a sign of exaltation. In his letter to the Philippians (Phil.2:6-8), St Paul writes about the humility of Christ; He, who took upon Himself the condition of a slave, and for this reason He has been exalted.
2. Secondly, we see the Ascension as a fulfilled promise. Before His passion, Jesus told His disciples that He must go and prepare a place for them. “I will go and prepare a place for you...” (John 14:2-3). The assurance we have is that where the “Head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope” (today's collect). Two things He said; He will leave and He will come back for us. How could someone believe that He indeed left, only to deny that He will come back for us?

3. Thirdly, His going was not to abandon us, but for our ultimate advantage. Again, in the gospel of John (16:7), He tells us. “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” This assurance of the Holy Spirit coming to aid our continuous sanctification, making us ready for His second coming. The Ascension also prepares us consciously for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Next Sunday will be Pentecost and it is a great opportunity, if you have not already begun to, start prayers and devotion of the novena to the Holy Spirit. If you have not paid much attention to the Holy Spirit over the past years, please do take this opportunity to pray and read about the Holy Spirit.

These are the words of the two men in white (*Angels - “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”* Acts 1:9-11, suggests to us that we have to await for His coming, not by idly gazing into the skies, but rather, we are advised to go about preparing ourselves by following the instructions He gave us while He was on earth and living according to His will.

Beloved, the Ascension is important in redirecting our focus. We are given a sustained idea of where our help should come from. In line with this, St. Paul advised: “So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ (*who ascended*) is seated at the right hand of God” (Col.3:1). The Ascension here becomes more of an active spiritual antenna directing us forward and heavenward. In this way, we are discouraged from undue adherence to things below; mundane and perishable commodities become obsolete with the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ therefore, is a productive divine energy bringing about our own individual and communal ascension; a life above evil and sin, above matter and misery; above darkness and damnation. We obviously cannot have an ascended Lord while living a descended life. We cannot have a glorified Lord while we remain unpopular and unfamed. Let us then connect actively with our Ascended Lord and thus experience the much-anticipated rising in every corner of our lives.

May the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ bring about our individual and collective “ascension” in various aspects of our lives for his greater glory.