

Feast of the Ascension of the Lord (A) 5/24/2020

Feast of the Ascension of the Lord (A) 5/24/2020

Dear 'Ohana of the Co-Cathedral of St. Theresa Church,

Greetings to you with the prayer of St. Paul, "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe..." (Eph. 1:17-19).

Someone said that there are three kinds of people. The first are those who make things happen, second, those who wait for something to happen, and third, those who don't know what happens. If you are to choose what kind of people you want to be, I assume the answer is the first – those who make things happen. We are blessed with these kinds of people during this unprecedented time. While some may have used this time to promote their agenda or take advantage of the situation, several people stepped up and made things happen. They are those who responded and attended the people affected with the deadly Coronavirus, those who helped out families who lost their jobs, the vulnerable, and elderlies in our communities, and others in need. Of course, they are the first responders, front liners, doctors, nurses, hospital staff, but also volunteers of food bank distribution and food pantries, those who offered their support and prayers, and those individuals who, in one way or another, are doing something to help, like making face masks for others to use. They are those who choose to make things happen, which we are forever thankful for.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Forty days after Jesus' resurrection, he was lifted into heaven. This feast day fittingly celebrates those who make things happen!

As narrated in our first reading, we heard our Lord Jesus made a compelling direct mandate -- "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This mandate, particularly the words "you will be my witnesses," describes what it is to be a follower of Jesus. We are told as the apostles watched in stunned amazement, staring at the sky as Jesus ascended into heaven, the angels nudged them, as it were, by saying, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?" (Acts 1:11). These heavenly beings challenged them to carry on where Jesus left off. As the Lord ascended into heaven to be perpetually present with them forever, they are deployed to make things happen for Jesus!

The gospel says this well, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mat. 28:19-20). We celebrate this mission today! The Church, all of the baptized Christians, have the mandate to go and proclaim the message of Jesus. We exist to witness! Like the disciples, we are Jesus' visible, physical, and concrete presence to the world. By our whole lives, by everything we say and do, we are witnesses of the immense meaning of the fact that a loving God has given all people the fullness of life, that we are loved and saved by Jesus, that each one has the dignity as sons and daughters of God, and are destined to eternal life through Jesus Christ.

We are witnesses of these because we know that these are the good news that ultimately gives meaning to human life. We are witnesses of these because we know that throughout the rest of history, it is through our witness that the world will know and understand why we are Christian. "You will be my witnesses." This is the one message and mandate of the feast of the Ascension in all its compelling directness. We are called to witness Jesus' great love that transforms life; that has to be shared, recounted, and brought to life in every age, in every language, in every medium.

"You will be my witnesses." You, all of us, are deployed to make this happen! Happy feast day of the Ascension of the Lord!

With my prayers,

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor, CCST