**The Ascension of the Lord – Cycle C**

May 11/12, 2013

Acts 1: 1-11; Eph 1: 17-23; Lk 24: 46-53

We celebrate today the Ascension of the Lord into heaven, 40 days after the Resurrection. Jesus Christ ascends into heaven today, taking with him his glorified body, taking with him his human nature which is now forever united with his divine nature. He is seated, both human and divine, at the right hand of the Father. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, has taken our humanity back to heaven. That is our faith.

As we heard in the second reading, “The surpassing greatness of his power raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand far above every power and authority not only in this age but in the age to come.”

And as we prayed in the responsorial psalm, “God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; a blare of trumpets for the Lord!”

What began at the Annunciation when the Angel Gabriel came to the Virgin Mary and said, “You will become the Mother of God” and the Word of God became flesh, incarnate, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, what began then is now brought to completion by the Ascension of Jesus into heaven. Yes, today is the fulfillment of the Incarnation!

The Incarnation, God becoming man, assuming human nature, was not a temporary thing. Jesus brought humanity with him to heaven in the Ascension. Jesus’ death and resurrection opened for us the gates of heaven, which were closed to us after Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden. By his Incarnation, Jesus is both human and divine; our humanity is united to Jesus’ divinity forever, and we are changed forever for we are now taken up with his divinity in the Ascension.

Jesus didn’t leave human nature, his body, behind on the earth; he didn’t undo the Incarnation when he ascended into heaven, and he didn’t leave us behind. He took us into himself and is now seated at the right hand of the Father. That is our hope. That is our faith.

We hopefully will also individually ascend someday, body and soul, into heaven. Our bodies too will be glorified in our ascension, *if we unite ourselves with Jesus*.

Jesus’ life gives us hope!

His death **justifies us**, i.e., put us into a right relationship with God.

His resurrection **sanctifies us**, i.e., makes us holy.

His ascension **glorifies us**, i.e., takes us to the heights of heaven itself!

Yes, Jesus gives us hope! He justifies us! He sanctifies us! And then he glorifies us!

It is easy to think of Jesus’ life as being different than ours (in a sense it was!) *but* everything that happened to Jesus in his life will happen to us. Where Jesus has gone, we too will go if we follow him.

Jesus showed us the way to the Father. We must pattern our lives on his life. Jesus was conceived, he was born and he grew in age, wisdom, and strength. He experienced a real death and then he truly rose from the dead. He finally ascended into heaven.

His path is our path. We too were conceived. We too were born and have grown in age, strength and wisdom. We too will experience a real death, and we will rise again to new life. Yes, we will also ascend into heaven someday to live forever with God in glory, if we unite ourselves with the Lord Jesus.

You are already experiencing this in your life, aren’t you? You have already begun the journey of following Jesus back to the Father a journey that will one day result in your ascension into heaven for all eternity.

In a sense, our lives are all about Jesus, and if we live united to him then his life becomes about us. Jesus is our center. He is our guide. He is our constant companion. He is the light that shows us the way. He is our beacon of hope. With Jesus all things are knowable, understandable, even the things that happen after death. With him our hope is restored, our fear of the unknown dissipates, and despair is vanquished.

But without Jesus we are lost and we become confused.

Follow Jesus. Pattern your life after his. Remember, he did not leave us behind. That is why we, like the Apostles in today’s Gospel, can be filled with “great joy” because the Ascension does not point to Jesus’ absence, but rather tells us he is alive in our midst in a new way, along with the Holy Spirit, in the Church which he established. He promised to remain with us in his Church. As Pope Francis recently said, Jesus and the Church are inseparable. We cannot really find Jesus elsewhere, so we must cling to the Church. Cling to the sacraments. Cling to the teachings of the Church. Cling to the Church as you would cling to Jesus himself.

We are never alone. We always have Jesus who is our Advocate, who awaits us, who defends us, who guides us, who pleads for us before God’s throne.