



19 May 2023

Letter S 07 / 23

Dear Parishioners,

I have always seen the Feast of the Ascension as a turning point on the Liturgical Calendar. It is an opportunity for us to re-commit ourselves to continue what the ascended Jesus entrusted to us with confidence. Below is a synopsis, I shared with the congregation who attended the Ascension Day services.

Firstly, we need to participate in God's mission in this world. In the Gospels, Jesus gives this mission to all the believers: *"Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all"*. Notice, the mission is not given to a select few but to all believers. To be a Christian is to be a proclaimer and an evangelizer. There is a difference between preaching and proclaiming. *"We preach with words but we proclaim with our lives."* As we celebrate the Lord's return to His Father in Heaven – His Ascension -- we are being commissioned to go forth and proclaim the Gospel of life and love, of hope and peace, by the witness of our lives. On this day of hope, encouragement and commissioning, let us renew our commitment to be true disciples everywhere we go, beginning with our family and our parish, living in a manner worthy of the call [we] have received.

Secondly, we need to live a life of Christian joy in the presence of the ascended Lord. According to Luke, the disciples *"returned to Jerusalem with great joy."* Apparently, Jesus' ascension and final blessing gave them, as it gives us, the assurance that, though absent, Jesus is still present, present even in the pain and sorrow we undergo.

Thirdly, Jesus taught us lessons of "faith, hope, forgiveness, mercy, redemption and love". We cannot put these lessons on a shelf and ignore them. They stand before us in the person of Jesus. Although no longer visibly present in the world, Jesus is present in his words, and we must make these words real in our lives as well as in the lives of others. Christianity was meant to be a Faith in which Jesus' followers would help and care for others, just as Jesus had done. But the spreading of the Good News to all nations is not a goal that can be attained by human might and craft. This is why Jesus promises to empower the Church with His abiding presence and that of the Holy Spirit. The challenge of sharing the Good News with all mankind should, therefore, begin with our admission that we have often been arrogant and overbearing. We must learn to be humble and let the Holy Spirit lead the way.

Fourthly, the ascended Jesus is our source of strength and encouragement. Perhaps some of the nagging doubts which inevitably accompany the journey of Faith could be lessened by our meditating on the Ascension and its implications. When we are too far from faith to pray on our own, let us remember that we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Righteous, praying for us. When the trials of life feel too heavy to bear, we must remember that Christ will come again in glory, the same glory in which Jesus arose from the tomb, the same glory to which Jesus ascended, and the same glory in which Jesus currently abides. Though our limited perception might find him absent, Jesus is fully present, participating in every moment of our lives. By His Ascension, Christ has not deserted us but has made it possible for the Holy Spirit to enter all times and places. In this way it is possible for each of us to be transformed by the power of the Spirit into agents or instruments of Christ. We become enlivened, and our actions become

animated in a new way by the Spirit of the God we love and serve. We have become other Christs in the world.

This is all for now.

With love,

Selwyn