

LIVING IN CONNECTEDNESS TO GOD
Homily Given by Deacon Henry Ohaya on May 16, 2021
The Ascension of the Lord
(Acts 1:1-11) (Ephesians 4:1-13) (Mark 16:15-20)

My dear brothers and sisters,

It is never easy to separate from someone you love and trust, who has been a guide and a counselor, knowing that you may never see them again. The Ascension of Christ into Heaven, a glorious event that we celebrate, must have been a sad day for the apostles, but Jesus did not leave them nor forsake them. He remained forever present with them and with us, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in all of us. Amen!

In our 1st Reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus instructs His apostles to wait in Jerusalem and first receive the Holy Spirit, before going on the mission of proclaiming the Gospel. He tells them that when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they will receive power to effectively be His witnesses to the ends of the world.

In our Gospel reading according to Mark, Jesus also tells them, that when they go into the world proclaiming the Good News, because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in them, they will drive out demons and heal the sick; they will be emboldened and will develop new abilities, such as speaking new languages; and their lives will be divinely protected from evil...and these signs of their work, Christ says, will confirm the presence of God in them and make people believe and be saved.

My dear brothers and sisters, what Christ said to the apostles, He is saying to us; that "Living our lives, guided by the presence of God, will result in powerful signs of God's grace in our lives that will make people believe and be saved".

So, we need the power of life that comes from the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, to effectively witness for Christ. We need to be connected to the presence of God in us, so that we can align our lives with the will of God, and make our lives a sign for Christ with the power to transform hearts and minds.

My dear brothers and sisters, ***our lives can be a sign for Christ***. Our lives (my life and your life) carry a message! We are instruments for Christ! So, what we do with our lives **matters**. How we live our lives **matters**. **HOW** we do what we do **really matters!** **Our lives matter!**

So, whether at home or at work or in school, whether in the community or in church, pay attention to your actions and words. Are you kind and patient? Are you peace-loving and joyful? Are you quick to forgive? Do you listen more than you speak? Do you show concern for the well-being of others?

In particular, how we treat others is a powerful signal that speaks volumes. Our behaviors, what we do, and **how** we do what we do, should be pointing others to a better way of life. Our behaviors should be pointing others to Christ!

How can we then become a more effective sign for Christ?

In the 1st Reading, the disciples asked Jesus before His ascension if He was going to restore the kingdom to Israel. Like the disciples, many of us Christians are sometimes too focused on and consumed by the challenges of our lives. We worry about the pandemic, our jobs, our families, our health, making more money, buying a house or a car, etc. All of these things have their place. There is nothing wrong with desiring a better life, but **what Jesus is saying to us is that what is of primary importance is recognizing and being connected to the presence of God within us**...because the presence of God in us, is the source of power and knowledge and wisdom and grace, that we need for life! It is how we know what is true, right, good and pleasing to God. It is the source of peace, joy, and love that we need to enjoy life! It is what enables us to trust and believe in the faithfulness of God.

Christ wants us to know that when our lives rest on the solid foundation of the presence of God in us, all of the good things of life that we need and desire will come to us at the right time and in due season. My dear brothers and sisters, Christ wants us to live **life in its fullness, lacking nothing that is good. He wants us to have an overflow of goodness.**

It is therefore necessary that we dedicate time to pray, study and meditate on the Word (Scripture). It is good to reflect on our life experiences and their lessons. We must strive to stay in communion with the Church, attending Mass consistently, receiving the Eucharist, and immersing ourselves in psalms and songs of praise and worship. Spending quality time with members of the faithful is a necessity. All of these practices and more, help us to stay connected to the presence of God. They help us to stay connected to Christ.

What else can we do to stay connected with the will of God so that our lives can be more effective signs for Christ?

Finally, of equal importance, is that we come to recognize the presence of God in all human beings and all of creation. In spite of our differences, we are all truly different expressions of the same, one God. **Our differences are intentions of God and are therefore good.** So, we all have the presence of God in us. We all are sacred beings. We all are beneficiaries of the grace of God. We all have been called to different vocations in the Body of Christ and in life. It is therefore important that we learn to love and work and relate as a family, working together to fulfill the will of our Father...to make the world a better place for all.

So, dear brothers and sisters, we know that after the Ascension of Christ, the Holy Spirit inspired, empowered and guided the apostles and the early Christians, as they proclaimed the Gospel and persevered through persecutions to spread the faith. And so, we too must live our lives in full awareness and connectedness to the presence of God within and without, so that we can live inspired...empowered and guided by the Holy Spirit...and be a sign of grace that helps transform lives.

May our lives (yours and mine) be a Sign for Christ! Amen.