

SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ACTS 1.1 LUKE 24.49 1 ST. PETER 4.7

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On the third day Jesus rose again from the dead...just like he said he would. For a little while he walked and talked with his friends...then it was time to go away again...back to his Father...it was time for him to go home.

The Ascension of Jesus is the pivotal moment in time Jesus was taken up into heaven...and he took his body with him. The last glimpse his friends had of Jesus were his bare feet...taken up into a cloud...and they no longer saw him.

While the Ascension of Jesus back into heaven means we no longer see him physically...it does not mean his work has stopped. Jesus continues his work in and through the Church...in and through each and every one of us.

Luke tells us in Acts what he wrote about in his first book...his Gospel...deals with everything Jesus began to do and teach until he was taken back to heaven. The word we need to focus on here is...BEGAN!

For the first half of the Church year...from Advent Sunday until Ascension Day...we talk about the life of Jesus...in a systematic and chronological order:

- Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary
- Jesus walked, talked and healed
- Jesus suffered, died and was buried
- Jesus rose again on the third day
- Jesus walked and talked some more
- Jesus ascended back to heaven

Now it's time to get to work putting into practice in the life of the Church and our own personal lives what we have learned. It's time for us to continue the work Jesus began. And he promised to send us the Holy Helper to empower us to do the work we can't do on our own.

During the reading of this morning's Gospel we extinguished the Paschal Candle that has been lighted at all Masses since the Easter Vigil. It is our dramatic liturgical reenactment of what Jesus' friend witnessed first hand.

After today and for most of the Church Year the Paschal Candle stays "hidden" in the Sacristy until the next Easter Vigil. We should not stare at the candle no longer lighted...it does not mean Jesus the Light of the World is no longer present in our lives. Jesus told his friends to be happy he was going away and not to despair. He told them he would always be with them...until the end of time. He makes the same promise to us.

Acts tells us the disciples stood looking up into the sky, their eyes fixed, unable to fathom what they had just seen. They could not have fully grasped what they had just witnessed...but they soon would.

The angels promised we would see Jesus come back one day in the same way he left...surrounded by clouds and bright white light. We don't know when that will happen. What we are to do is live our lives as if it Jesus were to return this very moment. The question we must ask ourselves...are we ready?

We get ourselves ready for Jesus' return by committing ourselves to continuing the work he has already begun in each of us. We can't just stand by idly staring at the sky waiting for Jesus to return...we need to get busy and stay busy...it's not enough for us to say we believe Jesus will come back some day...we need to show we believe it in our life's work.

In the Epistle for the Sunday after the Ascension, Peter gives us advice on how to do our work effectively:

- Maintain our self-control
- Be alert and pray continuously
- Love each other sincerely because it covers over many sins
- Be good managers of the different gifts God has given us
- Always show hospitality toward others
- Pray for peace throughout the world

Jesus' work is our work. This is no time to let others do our work for us. Let's get busy.

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