

Ascension

Intro. Some of us remember today's feast was called Ascension Thursday, forty days after the Resurrection. In 1969, our church reviewed the liturgical calendar and one suggested change was moving Ascension to a Sunday to elevate its significance as one pivotal moment in our Easter celebration. It had lost some of its significance celebrated on a weekday. All but six dioceses in the United States made the move. Ascension marks the *end* of the Lord's earthly ministry and the beginning of *our* ministry. The coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost concludes the Easter season.

I. I have been praying for and thinking about the three men who were ordained. *Praying* for their peace of heart and mind; *thinking* about their excitement and joy. It has been a long journey. I

can remember all of that and a small sense of panic. After the celebrations were over everyone went home. When the last car disappeared down the street, I was left behind. I was on my own, "reporting for duty" to a pastor and a parish I didn't know. What do I do now? Like everybody else, right? Get to work. The evangelists described the day the Lord ascended to heaven in slightly different ways. Mark as usual was succinct. Luke's in Acts has a few more details, "...as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight." While they were looking at the sky, men in white asked what they were staring at. They could be allowed a few minutes to be stunned. And they were certainly sad that the Lord was leaving. I imagine also, a feeling of "what now?" The next verse tells us they went back to Jerusalem and their favorite

safe room and prayed. That was a good first thing to do. But that wasn't the end of it. The Holy Spirit would come and send them on the next part of their journey.

Concl. Despite my initial feeling in the days after I was ordained, I was never really on my own. When Mac, Mike and Michael are finished with the parties and first Masses, they won't be on their own either. They have the new community of a parish and the community of priests. All of us arrive at those moments when we look around us after finishing school, basic training, the wedding or medical treatment and think, "Now what?" After some of you are confirmed in two weeks, you might feel the same. That is a very important question for all of us who follow the Lord. One writer puts it this way: "We are the baptized. We have received the Holy

Spirit. Yet our temptation is to keep looking to heaven instead of trusting Christ's judgement and taking the mission into our own hands."

[M.McGlone, *NCR*, 2021] As disciples we are never just all on our own. We are part of a large community: friends, family and of course the Lord. He will confirm the work we do through amazing signs. That doesn't mean snakes and poison. But we have the duty to proclaim the good news of salvation through Christ; to bring healing of spirit, mind and body; through the power of the Holy Spirit. **The mission is ours. Now is not the time to stare blankly at the sky. God trusts us with his kingdom to keep working for the kingdom of peace and justice.**

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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