

## Commentary to the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord



Message: I invite you to place yourself under

Jesus' authority, become his disciple.

Today we celebrate the Ascension. As we say in the Profession of Faith, Jesus "ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." Before explaining what this means I will try to summarize what we have learned in the homilies since Easter. We have been exploring what it means to be a disciple - someone who listens to Jesus and follows him. We have seen that a disciple accepts Jesus' assurance: "I am the vine and you are the branches." "As the Father loves me so I love you." Along with that blessed assurance, a disciple recognizes requirements: "Remain in me. Remain in my love. If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love." A disciple knows what ultimately matters - to remain in Jesus.

Let me illustrate remaining in Jesus. Randy Alcorn tells about a British physician who died of AIDS. A young Christian man, he volunteered to treat patients in Zimbabwe. In the last days of his life he struggled to express himself to his wife. He only had enough strength to write the letter J. She started saying words beginning with that letter. Finally she said, "Jesus?" He nodded. Yes, Jesus. Jesus filled his thoughts. That's all he wanted to say. That's all his wife needed to know. In the end that's all each of us needs to know. For a disciple - like that young physician - Jesus gives the assurance and the requirements for our lives. We see that as we celebrate his ascension to the right hand of the Father. "Right hand" means "power" and "authority" - words Jesus speaks to the disciples in the first reading. And in the second reading St. Paul describes Jesus "at the right hand" above every power with "all things beneath his feet." Thus we glimpse how the drama ends. On the Feast of the Ascension we see that we belong to a story - the drama of human history that climaxes in Jesus' triumph. As his disciples you and I have a part in that story.

Now, any good story involves conflict, suspense and unexpected twists. I sometimes remind young people of this, for example, in confession when they tell me about the disappointments, confusion and outright suffering they experience. I tell them that God has a plan for them, that he has created each one with a purpose, a role to play. God is the master story teller. Each person has a part in the overall plot. There are no extraneous characters. I think about Rosie Cotten - a very minor character in the Lord of the Rings. She becomes Samwise' wife after he returns from his adventure. She hardly has the stunning beauty of Arwen or courage of Eowyn. But for me the Lord of the Ring would not be the same without Rosie Cotten.

Something similar applies to you, sister - and to you, my brother. When the human drama reaches its climax - the day of final triumph - if you are not there, it will not be the same story. At the end of the story things will become clear: Why each character has to face his own crisis, conflict and pain. On today's feast we glimpse how the story ends. Next week we will see how it begins. Don't miss it. It's a darn good story - and you are called to be part of it. I invite you to place yourself under Jesus' authority, become his disciple. He won't take away all your pain and questioning. But he will give you a part in the great drama - it won't be the same story without you. Amen.

Fr Phil Bloom