

Commentary on the Gospel for Wed, May 8th 2013

Tomorrow is Ascension Thursday and it appears from the Gospel readings chosen for the Mass this week that we are being prepared for this event. Our belief, as Roman Catholics, is that Jesus, after a bit of time appearing to friends during this time after the Resurrection ascended into heaven, once more taken from them.

One can imagine their distress; just as they were enjoying Jesus's occasional visits post-crucifixion, he leaves again. I can recall the picture on a holy card that I had as a girl: the scene is a dusty hillside; eleven men and a couple of women are there (Mary and Mary Magdalene?) and Jesus is also. He however is several feet above the ground and clouds are opening above his head. Shock, confusion, and sadness are on their faces. See the end of Luke's Gospel for his version.

Jesus spends a great deal of time, as reported in John's Gospel, during the Last Supper on the "Final Discourses," summarizing the main points of His teaching, His relationship with the Father, our need to follow Him to be united with the Father. He also describes the coming of the Holy Spirit who will spark the energy for the apostles to begin to spread His word.

This Eastertime provides a good time to take some moments and review Jesus's mission as He describes it and His attempts to describe what it will be like once the Advocate has come. (John 14, 15, 16.) "The Spirit of Truth will guide you to all Truth." Where are we in this story, still mourning Christ's death, in a kind of limbo waiting and fearful, or have we moved ahead to an experience of Pentecost?

An Ignatian form of prayer - contemplation - which invites entering into a Scripture scene with our imagination is made for us to enter into any piece of this story to discover more deeply God's call for us these days and God's commitment to accompany our attempts to respond to the Spirit's urgings within us today.

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