



DARE TO DREAM

Ascension – Go and Proclaim!

Week Beginning 16th May

Before you begin the prayer...

'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation'. Today we celebrate the Feast of Our Lord's Ascension into heaven and his mandate to the disciples to go and spread the Good News to every nation.

There is a story that comes from the Hassidic tradition. In the days of the Baal Shem Tov, the saintly founder of the particular tradition of Hassidism, would take his disciples to a quiet spot in the forest. There they would make a fire, and dancing around the fire the Baal Shem Tov would lead his disciples in deep prayer. After the death of the saint, the disciples continued to go to that spot in the forest, to light the fire, to dance. But they could not remember how to pray, and their excursions were not the same. Overtime they forgot to dance and later they no longer lit the fire. Eventually even the place of encounter was forgotten. An era had passed and an experience was lost.

Just over two thousand years ago a motley group of disciples were given the daunting task of continuing the dance that Jesus had danced for them. It wasn't going to be easy but the fact that the Church still exists today is testament to the tremendous zeal and commitment that they had to fulfilling their mandate. Unlike the disciples of the Baal Shem Tov, Peter, James, John, Paul and all the others did not forget the dance. Jesus may have ascended into heaven, but his presence continued in their hearts and minds. They did not forget the place of encounter instead they became the place of encounter for others to come to know Jesus.

We might ask ourselves – will the Church still exist two thousand years from now? We can be sure that the challenging times that the original disciples lived in were no less challenging than they are now. In the early days of the Church there were those who had known Jesus personally, people who had encountered him, people who had initially rejected what he offered. Today the world will only come to encounter Christ by the witness, the prayer and the love of our desire to share it for as St. Teresa of Avila once prayed:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Video - Watch and listen to Fr. Tony Pazhayakalam

Prayerfully read this passage from the Gospel of Mark 16:15-20

And Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover."

- Take some to ponder on the words you have just read.
- Notice if there is anything, a word or phrase that stands out for you.
- Read the passage again and then reflect upon all or some of these questions: if you are doing this as a family or a group, make sure everyone is given the opportunity to speak.

Personal Reflections

- What does it mean to you to, 'Go and preach the Gospel'?
- How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus said this to them?
- How you feel knowing that Jesus is saying these words to you?

Now thinking about your parish and local community

- In this year of 'The God who Speaks' how is your parish responding to Christ's mandate to 'Go and preach the Gospel', especially as we move out of the pandemic?
- Mark's account of Jesus showing himself for the last time before he ascends to heaven is full of hope and assurance. How can we take our faith confidently into a new post-pandemic world, where there continues to be so much suffering, loss of hope and confusion? In what way is/can our parishes be the body of Christ in the area of the diocese in which you live?

Action

- Set up parish groups to read the Gospel of Mark. This is the shortest Gospel. Take it in small chunks and as a group ask yourselves two questions:
 1. What is the message for us in this part of the Gospel?
 2. How as a parish/deanery can we respond to it?

Finish with a prayer asking the Holy Spirit for the grace to respond.