

- On your Catholic calendars, the Ascension is marked for this Thursday and may be marked as a holy day of obligation.
  - However, in our Archdiocese, and in most dioceses in the U.S., the celebration of the Ascension of Jesus into Heaven is transferred to the nearest Sunday, which is next Sunday. So...no holy day this Thursday.
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- One of the greatest challenges in today's faith is *relativism*—thinking that whatever **I** believe as an individual about God is as true and good as whatever anyone else believes.
- But what is “good” except that which is in accord with truth?
  
- Jesus says to the apostles in our Gospel today: “*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything.*”
- Now, virtually all Christian communities consider that verse to mean that...if they are acting sincerely and from their heart—which the vast majority no doubt are—they will not be led astray because the Holy Spirit is guiding them.
- ...and yet...if God is a God of truth (which He is)...and if the Holy Spirit guided each one of these into absolute truth, would they not all have identical beliefs? At least, wouldn't they have beliefs that did not conflict, as they often do?
- But, obviously, they do not...evident by the mere fact there are so many thousands of Christian communities.
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- When Jesus assured the guidance of the Holy Spirit, He was speaking to those apostles--those bishops of the early Church... this Church which has continued for 2000 years, and He told

them...and us: *“I am with you always, to the close of the age.”*  
(Mat 28:20 RSV)

- And in the Old Testament, we see how God never left His people...the Jews...despite their periodic infidelity, rebellion, etc.
- Because the New is foreshadowed in the Old, God was setting the precedent for the future...that He never abandons His Church and the Holy Spirit’s guidance of it—despite periodic turmoil, difficulties, scandals, etc. That would break His own promise, which He will not, and cannot, do.

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- Now, very often we’ll read of conversion stories to Catholicism citing the realization that, without some divinely-inspired authority to govern the faith and to interpret scripture, we would be left floundering in their own subjective judgments...
  - ...and then people realize: If God has left no absolute authority, and if I don’t like this church, I can go start my own...because my ideas and interpretation are, therefore, just as good as anyone else’s—no matter how much it may diverge from historical Christianity.
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  - We all know people who have gone “church-shopping”—to find a church that, essentially, coincides with their own opinions.
  - And as the searcher looks across the vast expanse of christian churches and denominations, one could hardly blame them for throwing up their hands in exasperation and staying home... because: “Who is right? Why bother; I’ll just keep my own counsel?”
  - ...thus becoming their own pope, bishop, pastor and congregation...and really, their own god—for if one decides for

himself what is right and wrong, what do we become BUT our own god?

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- But the important thing is that question Pontius Pilate posed to Jesus: “What is truth?”
- Well...every church says it has the truth. But our case for our Catholic Church is history.
- We can trace our genealogical history, as it were, in the apostolic succession from Peter and the apostles all the way to the present day—that passing of the baton, as it were, from century to century to century... founded by Christ upon the rock of Peter and which He promises not to abandon...and as the original Christian Church from which all others have their initial origin.
- And because Jesus promised to be His Church “until the close of the age”, and by the Father’s own precedent not to leave His people...we know that in the Catholic Church resides the fullness of revealed truth.

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- This certainly is not intended to denigrate other Christian communities, for they are our Christian brothers and sisters. On the contrary, by the very fact that they seek God in Jesus Christ, they participate in truth and we applaud them in that...and by their charity and love of Christ they obviously still have the movement of the Holy Spirit within them in many ways
  - Yet God is a God of peace and unity...who longs for unity among His people...ONE body of Christ under the one totality of truth which is Christ.
  - More than all other things, this sharing of truth is how we love one another...as Jesus commands us to do.

- We have historical and scriptural comfort and assurance of knowing—by the words of Jesus Himself—that fullness of revealed truth resides in our first and original, Church...a fullness of truth we hope to share with all others to draw all Christianity under one banner once again.
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- Individually and in private groups we can be led astray by wrong reasoning and passions; we've seen this even in among Catholics.
- And This is why we look to the Church...for this is why Christ gave us the Church. *“He who hears you, hears me. And He who hears me hear Him who sent me.”*
- For example, in our first reading today, when there was a dispute of faith in Antioch, where did they go to resolve it? To the Church...the recognized leaders, to ensure unity of belief, and to ensure the guidance of the Holy Spirit in this guaranteed authority.
- Even St. Paul—taught by revelation of Jesus Himself—sought the authority and teaching established by the Church authorities.

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- Disagreements are natural and unavoidable...but through its structure, the Church is equipped by God to resolve them.
  - ...because, after all, even the scriptures are a product of the Church...guided by the Holy Spirit.

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- In the Gospel today, Jesus speaks of peace: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.”*
  - Find peace in following God through the teachings of His Church that He established so long ago. Because when we are faithful to her, we are faithful to HIM...for, as Jesus told Peter and the apostles: *“What you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven.”*

[Acts 15:1-2, 22-29](#)

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers,  
“Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice,  
you cannot be saved.”

Because there arose no little dissension and debate  
by Paul and Barnabas with them,  
it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others  
should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders  
about this question.

The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church,  
decided to choose representatives  
and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.

The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas,  
and Silas, leaders among the brothers.

This is the letter delivered by them:

“The apostles and the elders, your brothers,  
to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia  
of Gentile origin: greetings.

Since we have heard that some of our number  
who went out without any mandate from us  
have upset you with their teachings  
and disturbed your peace of mind,  
we have with one accord decided to choose representatives  
and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,  
who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So we are sending Judas and Silas  
who will also convey this same message by word of mouth:

‘It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us  
not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities,  
namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols,  
from blood, from meats of strangled animals,  
and from unlawful marriage.

If you keep free of these,  
you will be doing what is right. Farewell.’”

[Ps 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (4) **O God, let all the nations praise you!**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

May God have pity on us and bless us;  
may he let his face shine upon us.  
So may your way be known upon earth;  
among all nations, your salvation.

**R. O God, let all the nations praise you!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

May the nations be glad and exult  
because you rule the peoples in equity;  
the nations on the earth you guide.

**R. O God, let all the nations praise you!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

May the peoples praise you, O God;  
may all the peoples praise you!

May God bless us,  
and may all the ends of the earth fear him!

**R. O God, let all the nations praise you!**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

[Rev 21:10-14, 22-23](#)

Reading 2

The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain  
and showed me the holy city Jerusalem  
coming down out of heaven from God.

It gleamed with the splendor of God.

Its radiance was like that of a precious stone,  
like jasper, clear as crystal.

It had a massive, high wall,  
with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed  
and on which names were inscribed,  
the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites.

There were three gates facing east,  
three north, three south, and three west.

The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation,  
on which were inscribed the twelve names  
of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

I saw no temple in the city  
for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb.  
The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it,  
for the glory of God gave it light,  
and its lamp was the Lamb.

[Jn 14:23-29](#)

Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Whoever loves me will keep my word,  
and my Father will love him,  
and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.  
Whoever does not love me does not keep my words;  
yet the word you hear is not mine  
but that of the Father who sent me.

“I have told you this while I am with you.

The Advocate, the Holy Spirit,  
whom the Father will send in my name,  
will teach you everything  
and remind you of all that I told you.  
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.  
Not as the world gives do I give it to you.  
Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.  
You heard me tell you,  
‘I am going away and I will come back to you.’  
If you loved me,  
you would rejoice that I am going to the Father;  
for the Father is greater than I.  
And now I have told you this before it happens,  
so that when it happens you may believe.”