

Reflection for the Feast of the Ascension

Today we as a parish and as an Archdiocese celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Traditionally this Feast is celebrated 50 days after Easter Sunday and in the past was popularly called Ascension Thursday. Today in the United States all the dioceses except for the Ecclesiastical Provinces of Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Omaha, and Philadelphia, celebrate the Feast of the Ascension on the Sunday after the traditional Ascension Thursday. The celebration of the Feast was moved to a Sunday so that more of the faithful could participate.

The Feast of the Ascension is when we as a people of faith celebrate the completion of Christ's earthly mission, and His ascension to His Father and our Father. The Sunday following the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. With the Feast of Pentecost, the Church is born and guided by the Holy Spirit.

From the birth of Christ, on Christmas day to His ascending to heaven on the Feast of the Ascension we mark the time that Christ is in this world. The events we celebrate from Christmas to the Ascension of the Lord speak of Christ reaching out to us and helping us take up our crosses and follow him in this world and in the next. This Sunday with Christ ascending to heaven and to His Father, marks the end of His mission in this world, but not His working in the world. The 33-year mission of the Son of God, walking this earth might have come to an end, but the world and humanity are forever changed.

Jesus Christ's, close relationship with the world through His birth, life, death, and resurrection forever changes the relationship that God the Son has with humanity. Today and to the end of time we as believers, find Christ relatable and caring, He is one like us in all things but sin. Jesus knows of the daily challenges we face to walk in this world with our eyes set on the world to come. His time in this world has created a path for us to follow, and even though He is no longer with us in this world in the same way that He was before the ascension, we still have a relationship with Him.

At this time of year there are many young people experiencing change in their lives, completing one chapter of their lives, and moving onto another. Be it graduation from High School or College, or maybe receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion or Confirmation. Many of the youth in our community at time of year are celebrating the joy of accomplishments be it in their secular lives or in their faith journey. These accomplishments have a profound impact on their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Just as Christ completing His mission in this world has and continues to have a profound impact on the world.

The journey that led our youth to graduation or a sacrament will continue to have an impact on their lives. Be it what they learned in School or in Faith Formation. One should not underestimate the impact of the relationships that they developed with their friends or the Teachers in School or in Faith Formation. The knowledge that they have gained and the friendships they have developed are an important part of the Diploma or the Sacrament that they have received. The growth in knowledge provides them an opportunity to have a deeper relationship with the God who has created them. This loving God has given them talents and gifts that they can use to make a positive difference in the world and be drawn closer to the Him.

In closing this Feast of the Ascension of the Lord provides us an opportunity to be reminded that Christ has completed His mission in the world but not His work in this world. Every time we gather for Mass, read sacred scriptures, pray the Stations of the Cross, or other devotional prayers we embrace Christ's mission in this world and allow His work to continue in our lives. May we allow the chapters of our lives that we have completed to continue to have a positive impact on our lives. The lessons we have learned in the past can serve us well in the present and the future. The friends and acquaintances of our past can continue into the present and future allowing us to support them and learn from them. Most importantly the grace that we have received from the Sacraments or other milestones of our lives can and should draw us closer to God in the present age and into the future.