

The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11 Eph. 1:17-23 Mark 16:15-20

HOMILY

We know from our own experience that good-byes can be painful. While we may not like good-byes, we know that we cannot avoid them. We have to come to terms with letting go. In terms of his disciples, the ascension of Jesus demanded some element of letting go of Jesus. We like cling to people who are significant to. We like them to be visible to us. Seeing their face can mean much more than just talking to them over the phone calls and much more than simply exchanging emails with them. This is marked out in the First Reading where we see disciples caught up staring into the sky as Jesus was being taken up into heaven. An important question was immediately put to the disciples: *'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky?'* The question suggests that the disciples are looking in the wrong direction if they want to see the Lord. They won't see him by standing there, looking into the sky. Somehow, that excitement of looking into the sky had to come to end for a good reason. It was something that did not need to be prolonged.

ASCENSION IS ABOUT A DIFFERENT PRESENCE

The return of Jesus to the Father, is not another blow inflicting the pain of absence. The risen Lord had not really left them; he was present to them in a new way. That is why today's feast is much more a celebration of the Lord's presence rather than a lament for the Lord's absence. Today's gospel reading expresses that very well. As he *'was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.'* The emphasis of today's feast is not on the first element of being taken away but on the on the second element where we see the Lord working with them – with all of us. We are about the Lord working with his disciples. Much more today, we the disciples of today need to be disposed to Lord wanting to work with us. Ascension is a celebration of openness to working with the Lord. The feast of the Ascension is a good opportunity for each of us to wait and pray for the outpouring the Lord's Presence through the work of the Holy Spirit. Let us not waste time staring into the sky but let us focus on that openness to this new presence.