

Beloved in Christ, today is the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we affirm this great truth in our professing of faith - **“He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”** The Ascension means that Jesus has gone before us in order **to open up the gates of heaven for us!** So that, when we are able to conquer sin and temptations, heaven will be ours. Again, the Ascension means that we can now live everyday with the hope of heaven. Knowing that where Jesus has gone, we can follow into the highest heavens! This is the beautiful truth we celebrate today. Jesus used the past forty days to **encourage and to prepare the Apostles for their future ministry.** Then, on the day of the Ascension, Jesus led the disciples out to the Mount of Olives. As they were talking, He was lifted up and the cloud took Him from their sight (Acts 1:9), but in Luke 24:50-51, the Ascension took place in the context of **blessing**, Jesus passes His Spirit upon them before He left. In fact, the ascension does not mean a farewell of Jesus. This is the mystery of the Church! With Jesus' Ascension, the earthly mission of Jesus ends, but the mission of the Holy Spirit and His Church begins.

Our first reading today tells us that these forty days after Easter were a time of preparation. **Jesus told the disciples not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised (Acts 1:4).** Why should Jesus command the disciples to stay in Jerusalem? The answer is that He has established the City as the Spiritual Kingdom of God. The invisible Body of Christ has its seat in Jerusalem where Christ the King sits on His Throne. What was the promise of the Father? Obviously, it was the promise of the reception of the Holy Spirit. Hence, upon their return, the disciples went to the upper room and devoted themselves to prayer. They were about one hundred and twenty (Acts 1:13-15). This began the **first Novena to the Holy Spirit in the church.** We need the Holy Spirit and **without the Holy Spirit, we can neither do any meaningful evangelization,** nor, can we go out into the whole world and proclaim the Kingdom of God.

In our second reading today, Paul explains that Jesus Christ, “having gone through death, resurrection and ascension into heaven and now seated at the right hand of the Father, **is more powerful. His power is far above every principality, every authority, every power...** and God puts all things beneath his feet... and made Him the head over all things for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Having dominion over all creations, Jesus commanded His apostles, **“go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature”** (Mk. 16:15). Jesus gives every one of us His gifts of grace. For only one reason: so that we can continue His mission in the Church. Although, Jesus goes away, the beautiful truth of our religion is that Jesus always comes to us, and that He is always with us, even though we can't see Him anymore (cf. Mt. 28:20b Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age).

Though Jesus has been ascended into heaven, Jesus is alive **in our hearts through Baptism and through the graces we receive in every Eucharist. He is present in every event in our lives.** We can turn to Him for guidance. He is always there to give us the strength we need to follow Him and to do His will. My brothers and sisters, in our readings today we hear Jesus' last earthly words. They are very important, because He's talking to each one of us. Jesus tells us: “You will be my witnesses!” Witnesses to what? Witnesses to His death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Finally, dear friends, the ascension of Jesus Christ can be summed up as follows: Jesus Christ ascends into heaven to open the door of the Holy Spirit for us; to be our eternal ‘high priest’. To create a longing in us for Him to come back **“This Jesus will come the same way as you have seen him going into heaven”** (Acts 1:11). Jesus promised us the Holy Spirit is going to come upon us, to empower us, to strengthen us for our mission in the Church. To be His apostles and witnesses. **We all have to live as those first apostles did. By following Jesus' teachings and examples. By living His life of joy and love and peace! By always looking for ways to share our faith** in the Resurrection with others! Jesus wants to lift everything up to God! He wants to draw all people to heaven. He wants to do these things —through His Church, through the witness of our lives so that we can share His glory (John 17:24). Let us use the Novena: nine -days - prayers to prepare ourselves to receive the Holy Spirit and our life will never be the same but, transformed us as Christian soldiers for His greater glory. Amen!