

## Ascension C SML 2019

### From a Sermon by St. Leo the Great, Pope

The days which passed between the Lord's resurrection and his ascension were by no means uneventful; during these days great sacramental mysteries were confirmed, great truths were revealed. In those days the fear of death with all its horrors was taken away, and the immortality of both body and soul affirmed.

It was after the Lord breathed on all his apostles and filled them with the Holy Spirit; and after giving the keys of the kingdom to blessed Peter, whom He had chosen and set above all the others, Our Blessed Lord entrusted Peter with the care of His flock.

During these days the Lord joined two of his disciples as their companion on the Road to Emmaus, and by chiding them for their timidity and fear, He swept away all the clouds of our uncertainty. Their lukewarm hearts were fired by the light of faith and began to burn within them as the Lord opened up the Scriptures. And as they shared their meal with Him, their eyes were opened in the breaking of bread, opened far wider to the

sight of their own glorified humanity than were the eyes of Adam and Eve to the shame of their sin.

Throughout the whole period between the resurrection and ascension, God's providence was at work to instill this one lesson into the hearts of the disciples, to set this one truth before their eyes, that our Lord Jesus Christ, who was truly born, truly suffered and truly died, should be recognized as truly risen from the dead. The blessed apostles together with all the others had been so intimidated by the catastrophe of the cross, that their faith in the resurrection was at best uncertain; but now they were so strengthened by the evident truth that when their Lord ascended into heaven, far from feeling any sadness, they were filled with great joy.

Indeed that blessed company of apostles had a great and inexpressible cause for joy when they saw man's nature rising:

- ✓ above the dignity of the whole heavenly creation,
- ✓ above the ranks of angels,
- ✓ above the exalted status of archangels.

Nor would there be any limit to its upward course until Humanity (capital H – Our Ascended Lord) was admitted to a seat at the right hand of the Father.

Humanity at the right hand of the Father is a higher life than the natural life unbelievers are living right now. I do not mean in the next life, but in this life. Believers know we can:

1. know truths beyond the power of your reason and your experience;
2. have reserves of power for crisis, temptations, sorrow, and trial over and above those you now possess;
3. enjoy another life than the life you live now, in this world, and possess a peace the world cannot give?

In John's Gospel, the sinful woman at the well asked these questions in not so many words when she asked for the living waters of which Jesus spoke to her. She was an unbeliever who would come to believe.

By bringing Divine Life into history, He made it possible for we believers in some way to receive it. "I have come that they may have life and may have it more abundantly." (JN 10:10)

Thinking about religion, we've all asked, "But how can I receive the divine life of Christ?" By singing hymns? Reading scriptures? But these would not establish a vital relation with Him any more than reading the Gettysburg Address would establish a personal relationship with Abraham Lincoln.

The answer to the question "How can I receive the divine life of Christ, so as to live it more abundantly as Our Blessed

Lord said?” is if Our Blessed Lord, in some way, infused your soul with his Divine Life. And this would not have happened if Christ remained on earth. For if He remained on earth, then He would not have been any closer to us than:

- ✓ an embrace,
- ✓ or a spoken word,
- ✓ or a hand lifted in blessing,

from the outside in. Those 40 days from the Ascension to the Resurrection were surreal. Jesus would show up out of nowhere behind locked doors and then vanish. He'd walk the Road to Emmaus out of nowhere and then vanish. That is why He said, “It is good for you that I go, for if I do not go, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.” In other words, from the inside, in.

We often think the contemporaries of Jesus had it better than we do. But most of His contemporaries did not believe in Him. They nailed him to the cross. Why? Because they were not infused with the Holy Spirit from the inside in, as we are. The Holy Spirit, which we all received at Baptism, and again at Confirmation, makes it possible for us to be believers. Without the Holy Spirit, we'd rest on our own laurels and that would be difficult to say the least.

His departure on Ascension Thursday was the very condition of the Apostles receiving Him from the inside in on Pentecost. If He sent His Spirit, then He would not be an external voice or an example to be copied, but a veritable life to be lived. Five times at the Last Supper did Our Blessed Lord tell his Apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth.” (JN 14:16)

“I have told you this while I am still with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.” (JN 14:26)

“When the Advocate comes whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth that proceeds from the Father, he will testify to me.” (JN 15:26)

“But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (JN 16:6)

“But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, we will guide you to all truth.” (JN 16:13)

The gifts of the Holy Spirit, through the merits of Our Blessed Lord, are poured into your soul, enabling you to:

- ✓ know truths beyond the power of your reason and your experience;
- ✓ have reserves of power for crisis, temptations, sorrow, and trial over and above those you now possess;
- ✓ enjoy another life than the life you live now, in this world, and possess a peace the world cannot give.

And none of this would have been possible for us believers if He had not ascended into heaven.