

Ascension Sunday
Christ the Good Shepherd, ORCC
Msgr. Harry Posner
13 May 2017

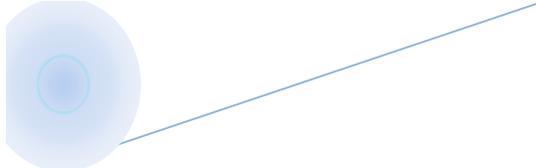
Not long ago, I was visiting a family with a little boy named Brandon. Like most four year olds, Brandon was a bundle of energy. He took delight in showing anyone who would pay attention, how high he could jump. And eventually, when he tired of jumping, he begged his mother to lift him up and hold him as high as possible. With the innocence of a child, Brandon knew that he needed help being raised up; he couldn't do it on his own.

The reality is that all of us want to be raised up, to live ascended lives. We want to break free from all the stuff that weighs us down. No one truly aspires to be last, or to be less than his or her potential. Whether we recognize it or not, we all have the desire to belong, to be part of something greater than ourselves.

The Feast of the Ascension celebrates more than just Jesus ascending into heaven. Jesus spent his ministry raising others up, setting people free from all that weighed them down. It's tempting to see the Ascension, the conclusion of Christ's earthly ministry, as an ending. But to think of it that way misses an important lesson. What we celebrate today is really a beginning. It marks the beginning of our call to be the hands and feet of Christ here on earth.

As we just heard in Mark's gospel, before his Ascension, Jesus told his followers very simply to get to work, to be active in the world around them. He told them to baptize, to teach, to carry on the work that he had started. His message was clear: GO – the world is waiting. Don't be afraid, don't let fear hold you back. No matter what you encounter, I will help you through it.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles highlights the urgency of the message. After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers were standing there trying to absorb all that had just happened, when two angels appeared and challenged them with a simple question – people of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? In other words: what are you waiting for? Get busy!



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As followers of Jesus we are challenged to stop spending our time staring at the sky, thinking about what it means to be a Christian.

The message of the angels still applies to us today – stop thinking about it and simply GO.

Go – and transform the world

Go – and pick up those who have fallen

Go – and heal those who are hurting

Go – and feed the hungry

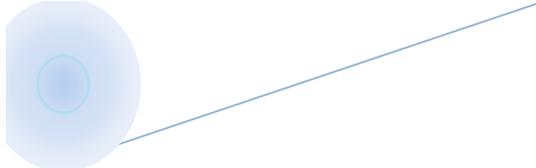
Go – and care for the sick and lonely

Go – and build my Church!

While prayer is an integral part of our faith, Jesus was clear that we are to let our faith transform our lives. Jesus is not looking for lip service, he's looking for action. We are challenged to move off the dime and to get our hands dirty in the work of salvation.

Next week we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost. It was the gift of the Holy Spirit that gave the followers of Jesus (including us) the strength and courage to be the Body of Christ in the world. And even in the midst of the crises and challenges we face, God gives us the grace to remember who we are – Christ to one another.

The message of this beautiful feast is simple: do not stay too long on the mountain. Do not spend all your time gazing at the stars, living in the past or dreaming about the future. We are the Body of Christ here on earth and each one of us, in our own unique way, share in the task of continuing Christ's mission. Look at the world around you through the eyes of your heart. Let go of all that holds you back and let God's love fill you with strength and courage to move forward. **Dorothy Day**, one of my favorite



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modern prophets said: **“The mystery of the poor is this: That they are Jesus, and what you do for them you do for Him.”**

The Ascension was just the beginning. Like little Brandon, let others raise you up and take the time to raise others up as well. Our spiritual journey is not walked in isolation. Jesus showed us how to ascend to the highest heights, now the rest is now up to us.