

Homily

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Ascension B Cycle

May 12, 2024

Today we celebrate the feast of the ascension. In today's gospel reading we find Jesus speaking with his disciples after his resurrection. Jesus has lived with his disciples for three years; he ate with them, traveled with them, preached in their midst, healed people, suffered and died and rose and appeared to them risen from the dead.

Now he is about to return to the one he calls his Father. The risen Lord tells them to bring the Good News about the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth!

In today's first reading from the Book of Acts of the Apostles we have the scene of the Ascension . . . of Jesus ascending into the heavens. After he ascends, we read that the disciples were stunned; they are caught just looking up, staring into the sky, and not knowing what to do. What kind of faith should they share? What kind of faith should they preach? What kind of faith should they live?

The challenge of the disciples at the time of his ascension is no different than what we face today on this Feast of the Ascension nearly 2,000 years later. People today are trying to figure out exactly what they believe or how to share the good news of our risen Lord with others in our secular world.

(Tell the story of the young man at the clean-up.) an example of our young (and not so young people today.)

We face the challenge of faith amid change and disillusion. Our church is amid a massive change. The state of the Catholic Church today in many ways resembles the situation we were in just before the Reformation in the 1500's. The corruption in the church at that time was just as scandalous as sexual abuse and cover up found in the church today.

We are often very frustrated at how to share our faith today or even name what exactly we believe in, to those who find religion and faith unimportant in their lives. Some think a little yoga or psychedelic drug can give them the religious high they are looking for. We find ourselves being like the disciples on that first Ascension day. In their confusion that first Ascension Day, they may well have recalled the first time they met Christ along the seashore. They had fished all night and had caught nothing. Yes, sometimes as we share our faith with others, we feel weary and unsuccessful just like them. As they said to Jesus, "We have worked all night and we have empty nets."

Many Christians in our world have similar feelings. Churches, monasteries, convents, and seminaries are being emptied. Tens of thousands are leaving the church. Many of our family members, friends and neighbors and coworkers aren't going to church. The dark shadows of some of our leaders and members in the recent past are depriving the church of Jesus Christ of credibility.

Yes, Christians are divided today. The differences are not primarily between churches but within them. Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth, chose such a moment of weariness and frustration to address us, his faithful disciples, we are the present disappointed fishermen, after a sleepless night of trying to share the faith and ending up with no catch. He says to us, "Cast your nets deeper!" We are called to have the courage to trust, to try again. "Go to the depths and spread your nets."

Yes, my brothers and sisters, even currently with its moments of weariness and frustration, we need to give Christianity another try. "To try again," does not mean doing the same thing over again, including repeating old mistakes. It means:

- To go deeper,
- To wait attentively,
- To be ready to act.

This feast of the Ascension is about our journey of faith in search of God amid a changing world,

- About lived faith,
- About an act of faith,
- About how we believe.

In Tomas Halik's book, [The Afternoon of Christianity](#), this pastor, and theologian gives us an excellent insight about people's search for faith today: His words speak to me as radical and simple. He says, "if we want to learn something essential about other people's faith, we should disregard:

- Whether or not they believe in God,

- What their views of God's existence are,
- Or what their church or religious affiliation is.

What should interest us is what role God plays in their lives,

- How they believe,
- How they live their faith in their inner world and in their relationships
- How their faith is transformed during their lives and how it transforms their lives.
- And whether and to what extent their faith transforms the world in which they live

It is only the practice of faith involving both a believer's inner spiritual life and their life in society that tells us what kind of God they do or do not believe in."

A person of faith sees the world differently,

(Go back to the story of the young man last Saturday. I missed how to put into words we were expressing our actions. A fundamental choice to bring life to a neighborhood.)

(Relate to St. Edith's and to IHM ministries)

Shortly we will profess the creed together and proclaim what we believe. . .what we put our faith in.

But our basic act of faith is choosing Jesus' way of being human. It is the most authentic expression of our belief, let the words and actions of Jesus soak into our hearts and radiate in our lives.