



The Feast of the Ascension

Lk 24:46-53

Dear Friends,

It is hard to count the times over the years the number of individuals, particularly young people, who came to me with the news that the world was coming to an end. They were sort of sure because they heard on TV or read it on the internet. They were coming to me to hedge their bets to find out what to do in case it was true.

In fact, it is true. The Bible tells us so! It is part of revelation. The world is coming to an end. The problem is we just do not know when. It is most likely we are not going to find out about the all-important “when” from some publicity seeker who happens to make the 5 o’clock news on a short news day.

Today’s first reading (Acts 1: 11-11) tells us how to handle this truly decisive reality about our lives. The message of Jesus is both consoling and challenging. Jesus tells the disciples on the mountain of his Ascension that it is not our concern. God’s timetable will determine when the world as we know it is going to end.

In the meanwhile, Jesus has given us a task. We are to be witnesses to the Good News that Jesus has revealed in his life, message and final passage thru death to life. In Jesus, we have come to know God as a loving and merciful savior. Our goal as human beings is to enter into this mystery of love. This is the Good News. We are gifted with time and life to embrace this gift and to share it. We have the Spirit to draw us into this call to accept Jesus’ challenge.

In the first reading from Acts, Jesus responds to the Apostles question about the end of the world in these words: *“It is not for you to know the time or the seasons that the Father has established. ...You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem...and to the ends of the earth.”* (Acts 1:7-8) The angel asks, *“Men of Galilee, why are you standing here looking at the sky?”* (Acts 1:11) In other words, get on with the task of living and proclaiming the Gospel. We share that task.

In the gospel today we read: **“Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins would be**

preached in his name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”: (Lk 24: 46-48).

The meaning of this beautiful feast of the Ascension is further captured in the words of the preface of the Mass:

Christ, the mediator between God and men

Judge of the world and Lord of all

Has passed beyond our sight

Not to abandon us but to be our hope.

Christ is the beginning, the head of the Church;

Where he is gone, we hope to follow.

The Christian response to the end of the world is not fear and anxiety. It is hope rooted in the reality that Jesus is with us all of the time. It is not hopelessness and confusion. It is a simple commitment to live with faith and trust in a God who has a better plan. We pray in the opening prayer of the Mass of the Ascension, “May we follow him into the new creation, for his Ascension is our glory and our hope.”

Many times, we have heard the stories of saints responding to the question, what would you do if you had only a day to live? They all have the same response. They would continue living life to the full seeking to do God’s will. The message of the Ascension tells us to do the same.