

PASTOR'S CORNER

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD: SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

For 40 days after his resurrection on Easter Sunday, the Bible says that Jesus travelled and preached with his apostles, preparing them for his departure from Earth. Ascension Day marks the moment Jesus literally ascended into heaven before his disciples, at the village of Bethany, near Jerusalem. Acts provides the longest account of Christ's farewell to his disciples, bidding them to preach the word of God and assuring them of his eventual return for the Second Coming, the day of judgement in which the virtuous will be saved, and the wrongdoers condemned.

The Feast of the Ascension is one of the Holy Days of Obligation, meaning that believers are obliged to attend Mass. For this reason, most Catholic dioceses now mark Ascension Day on the Sunday after its traditional Thursday date, to enable parishioners to attend services. Jesus' prayer for us: "That they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you sent me...and you love them even as you loved me." That is Jesus' great desire for us, and he died and rose to make that desire possible. That is the mystery of God's great love for us. And we have been baptized into the mystery of God's love. We now share the very life and love of God.

God's life within us draws us into unity, not just with God, but with one another. And our unity in love allows God's love to overflow and bear witness to the world around us. As Jesus reunites with his father, He tells us that our unity in love will testify that he and the Father are one, that he was sent into the world by his Father, and that we believers are one with God.

As we express our love for one another in daily life, God is working through us to transform the division and strife of our world into unity and peace. It's hard not to be stirred by Jesus' words. The challenge is: do we believe them enough to live by them? Will I, will we, choose to love today in a way that allows God's love in us to overflow to others? Will we, will I, accept the responsibility to be God's loving presence today in our little corner of the world? Unity and peace can only happen if you and I are willing each day to do our share of loving as Jesus has loved us.

Jesus assures us that if we accept the gift of God's love and in turn love others generously, then we will be with him and share his glory forever. Jesus' prayer challenges us today. Let us ask him to strengthen us in our efforts today to be a living witness of God's great love.

Happy Feast and may God bless and keep you safe!

Rev. Fr. Nobert Munekani SJ