



PARISH OF ST. AGATHA
23RD/24TH MAY 2020



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POPE FRANCIS ON THE ASCENSION [SUMMARY]

Even so, while Christ is at the point of ascending to heaven, the disciples, who had seen Him risen, still do not seem to understand what is happening. He is about to bring his Kingdom to fulfilment and they are still caught up in their own ideas. They ask him if he is going to restore the kingdom to Israel (cf. Acts 1:6). Yet, when Christ leaves them, instead of being sad, they return to Jerusalem “with great joy”, as Luke tells us (cf. 24:52). It would be odd if something had not occurred. Indeed, Jesus had already promised them the power of the Holy Spirit, who was to descend upon them at Pentecost. This is the miracle that changes everything. They become more confident when they entrust everything to the Lord. They are filled with joy. Moreover, that joy is the fullness of consolation, the fullness of the presence of the Lord.

FAITH BEARS WITNESS TO THE JOY THAT GOD GIVES

Receiving the joy of the Spirit is a grace. Moreover, it is the only force that enables us to preach the Gospel and to confess our faith in the Lord. Faith means bearing witness to the joy that the Lord gives to us. A joy such as this cannot be the result of our own efforts.

Jesus told his disciples that He would send them the Spirit, the Comforter, prior to his departure. In this way, he also entrusted the apostolic work of the Church to the Spirit for all time, until his return. The mystery of the Ascension, together with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, indelibly marks the mission of the Church: it is the work of the Holy Spirit and not the consequence of our ideas and projects. The Pope went on to highlight what to avoid.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

SELF-ABSORPTION: Church organisations and agencies, quite apart from the good intentions of their individual members, sometimes end up turning in on themselves, devoting energy and attention primarily to promoting themselves and to advertising their own initiatives. Some seem to be dominated by an obsession to continually redefine their own importance and their own bailiwicks (interests) within the Church. They presume to exercise supremacy and control over the very communities they are meant to serve. This attitude is almost always accompanied by the claim that they are exercising the role of “overseers”. They end up acting as if the Church was a product of their own calculations, plans, agreements and decisions.

ELITISM: A superior class of specialists who strive to increase their own influence but always with the main goal of promoting their own oligarchic privileges. The elitist temptation in some groups connected to the Church can be accompanied at times by a sentiment of superiority and of intolerance towards the rest of the baptised, towards the people of God who may attend parishes.

ABSTRACTION. Once they become self-absorbed, institutions and entities connected to the Church lose contact with reality and fall prey to abstraction. They needlessly multiply instances of strategic planning in order to produce projects and guidelines that serve only as means of self-promotion for those who come up with them. They take problems and dissect them through the lens of their own ideology. Everything, even references to the faith or verbal appeals to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, once taken outside of their proper context, can thus end up rigidified and unreal.

JOY OF ASCENSION AWAITS ALL WHO LIVE BY GOD’S WILL

To be a Christian is to understand that our lives are not about us, but about the One who created us. To Ascend to God from this world up to the next world, without end, means going through the same Way, the same Truth and the same Life, as Jesus lived on earth. It means imitating Jesus in holiness and suffering and acknowledging that everything we have, is a Gift from the Father. Jesus’ life experienced suffering, rejection and pain, however, He always remained in a state of heavenly Grace, because His human nature never lost Peace, Holiness, Joy or Happiness. If we live in the same sinless Grace of Love and Mercy, then Peace and Joy will remain with us too, and guarantee our own ascension someday.

SPIRITUALLY ASCEND OUR HEARTS UP TO HEAVEN NOW

The Joy of the Ascension complemented the Suffering of the Cross, in that through Christ’s hard life and Death, He opened for us a New Eternal Life in Resurrection. The Risen Christ ascended from this earth to unlock the Way into Heaven for us. Our spiritual Ascension begins now with Christ here on earth. That is why after the Priest at Mass says. *Lift up your hearts*, we reply, *We lift (Ascend) them up to the Lord*. Remember that only a pure and holy heart is the key that unlocks Heaven’s Door.

JESUS’ NEW LOOK

We must believe that the Risen Christ stands before us today in a New Body. After Jesus Ascended, He then Descended, in the invisible form of the Holy Spirit and became visible in a New Way or a New Covenant in the guise of the Eucharist. He is not seen in human form anymore, but seen in sacramental form. He is clothed in a New Flesh, not human, but a Eucharistic Flesh, which does not taste of meat, but tastes of Bread. That is why Jesus tells us; *I Am the Living Bread come down from Heaven*. Believe and see Him now in the Church before it’s too late. He is amongst us physically in Holy Communion. Come to Him all you who hunger and thirst.

The Second Person of the Holy Trinity is Jesus and He had to Ascend to Heaven in order to allow the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, which is God and Jesus’ Spirit, to descend down throughout the whole earth and penetrate our hearts. The Mission of the Holy Spirit begins on earth with the Birth of the Church on Pentecost (next Sunday), only after the human nature of Jesus exits earth. If Jesus, who is the visible image of the invisible God, remained in Human Form, His Presence could only be felt and seen in one place, at one time, on earth. In His Spiritual Form, His influence and Power and Presence is sacramentally seen and felt in every corner of the earth through His Church.

SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

The world’s sense of right and wrong has been dulled and many have abandoned themselves to sexuality and evil. They eagerly pursue a career of indecency of every kind, embracing the Universe and vain ways as their false gods. To qualify for our own Ascension into Heaven, our minds must be renewed by a *spiritual revolution* so that we can put on the new self that has been created in God’s Way, in the goodness and holiness of the Truth, who is Jesus. God bless, Fr. Brendan