

## **HOMILY for FEAST of the ASCENSION of the LORD – Year ABC**

This Sunday's Gospel tells us how Jesus wished His followers make disciples of all the nations. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story about a missionary that I'd like to share with you.

When a young man signed on with a missionary agency, the head of the agency reminded him that he now must act like a missionary. The recruit was troubled & asked the head of the agency, "You know I have a girlfriend. Can I still kiss her goodbye at the airport?"

The head thought for a moment & said, "You may kiss her – if you kiss her the same way you kiss your mother."

The young man paused & then asked, "Can I warn my mother first?"

Anyway, we sure give thanks to God for blessing us with countless missionaries like the one in the cute story over the years. However, before talking about missionaries, let us take a look at the gift of the Paraclete/Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to send to His disciples upon His return to Heaven. As I have shared with you in my last couple of Sunday homilies, the Holy Spirit helped God the Father bring about our beautiful Creation & God the Son do all His miraculous works during His ministry & rise from the dead at Easter time. But, the Holy Spirit does not stop there. We have been told that the Holy Spirit would bring us its seven Gifts, twelve Fruits, and three Theological Virtues. Those seven Gifts are Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety, & Fear of the Lord. The twelve Fruits are Charity/Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Generosity, Gentleness, Faithfulness, Modesty, Self-control, & Chastity. The three Theological Virtues are Faith, Hope, & Charity/Love. If we search for those blessings of the Holy Spirit & make good use of them in our daily lives, we will certainly experience all sorts of miracles & meet God in this world.

However, there is one more blessing that the Holy Spirit would bring us, namely, the truth. That is why the daily readings of this past week have told us about the spirit of truth. We might think that only lately we have had to deal with fake information & yearned for the truth. Unfortunately, the people back then already had to deal with the same thing. A good example would be St. Paul who bought into fake information & evidently arrested & killed a lot of early Christians. Yet, he thought that he did the right thing. The risen Christ had to knock him off his high horse & show him the truth. Only then was Paul able to recognize the truth & turn his life around & come home to the risen Christ. That is why Jesus warned His disciples, "When the Paraclete comes, the Spirit of truth will bear witness on my behalf. You must bear witness as well... Not only will they expel you from synagogues; a time will come when anyone who puts you to death will claim to be serving God!" (John 15:26-16:4) As you can see, it is not easy to recognize the truth. Hence, Jesus warned His disciples about that terrible mistake & promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them distinguish the truth & learn more about it. That is why Pontius Pilate curiously inquired Jesus at the trial, "What is the truth?" Jesus then advised him to search for the truth because the truth would set him free. Surely, there are all kinds of benefits for us to search for the truth & being near it. It will open our eyes to a life of true peace & joy & eventually an eternal life in Heaven. It will free us from bad influences of darkness in this life & bring us a lot of wonderful blessings every day.

Once His disciples have possessed the truth, Jesus commanded them to go out into the world & preach about it like a missionary. This Sunday's Gospel tells us about Jesus' Command

to His disciples as following, "...Jesus came forward & addressed them in these words, 'Full authority has been given to me both in Heaven & on earth; go therefore & make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father & of the Son & of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you.'" As you can see, Jesus clearly commanded His disciples to go all over the world as missionaries & make as many disciples for Him as possible. Thankfully the early Church took His command seriously & went around the world to convert millions of people to be Catholics/Christians. Take St. Patrick for example. He was enslaved & badly mistreated. Instead of feeling sorry for himself & doing nothing for Jesus & His Catholic/Christian faith after that horrible experience, St. Patrick decided to be a missionary & face all sorts of dangers & challenges. He travelled to Ireland to preach the Good News of the risen Christ & converted the whole commonwealth to the Catholic faith. St. Paul & other missionaries have done the same thing & helped grow the number of Christians.

Unfortunately, the missionary spirit has disappeared in our modern time & has been replaced by endless fights in the Church over cultural issues. The Church has forgotten the sacred command of its Lord that we have heard in this Sunday's Gospel. It has been distracted by other demands of the time & priorities of a secular & materialistic society. It has forgotten whom it should obey & confused about what its top priorities are. That is why the Church has been divided & shrunk in its membership. If it does not heed our Lord's departing wish & try to convert more people to Christianity every day, it might not have any more members in the near future. Certainly that would be disastrous to its long-term existence in the world & heartbreaking to the Lord. So, I ask you to read today's Gospel again & find out for yourself what Jesus would want His disciples to do upon His departure. You do not have to take my words for it. Find out for yourself & carry out what Jesus would want us to do. If we follow His command & do our assigned task, He would repay us abundantly in this life & the next.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus completed His mission of salvation & returned to God the Father. He left with us the Holy Spirit & an important task of converting as many disciples for Him as possible. If we call ourselves Catholics/Christians, we got to take that task seriously & convince a lot more people to be Catholics/Christians every day. For the dream of Jesus is to save the whole world. So, let's make it happen for Him!