Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord. In the forty days since his Resurrection, Jesus has been preparing his disciples for this precise moment, he has completed his earthly mission and now returns to sit at the right hand of His Father in heaven. The number forty is significant in biblical history as we recall the forty years the People of Israel spent in the desert and the forty days Jesus himself spent in the desert. These desert experiences are a time of discernment and relationship-building with the Father. During these particular forty days in the post-Resurrection period, Jesus prepares his disciples for the mission he has entrusted to their care, he does not leave them empty-handed without the tools necessary to carry out the mission of witnessing to the Good News “to the ends of the earth.”

In a very joyful and hopeful way, Jesus assures his companions that the Holy Spirit, the Advocate and Paraclete, will infuse their lives to impel them forward with missionary zeal. It is interesting to note, that despite all that has happened, the disciples still hold tenaciously to the hope that Jesus is the messiah who will restore the kingdom of Israel. There is still the very human desire to see Jesus as the temporal or political messiah. Jesus’ response to the disciples has poignant meaning for us as well. “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority…” The gifts that God imparts to us, of grace and the Holy Spirit, help and support us. They help us to let go of our own preoccupations and longing for how things ought to be and to trust with greater docility and openness God’s plan for us. This spiritual insight also helps us to remember that our earthly life is impermanent; indeed, our ultimate destination is Heaven and Jesus himself shows us the way.

St. Josemaria Escriva, in his book, Christ is Passing By, writes that “Our Lord’s Ascension also reminds us of another fact. The same Christ, who encourages us to carry out our task in the world, awaits us in heaven. In other words, our life on earth, which we love, is not definitive. ‘Here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come’ (Heb 13:14), a changeless home, where we may live forever. Christ awaits us and we are citizens of heaven and at the same time fully-fledged citizens of this earth, in the midst of difficulties, injustices and lack of understanding, but also in the midst of the joy and serenity that comes from knowing that we are children of God.” These words of profound depth are a source of consolation and encouragement as we strive to be men and women in the world but not of the world. We are firmly ensconced in the reality of temporal existence while realizing that God has a final destination that lasts far beyond this workaday world.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our alumni, past and present parishioners and our families and visitors as we gather together this weekend for our parish festival. Our festival brings together friends who celebrate the rich history and memories that make up our St. Pius parish. I am grateful for our organizers and many volunteers who give countless hours to support us. I also congratulate our eight graders as they graduated this past Thursday. On behalf of the entire St. Pius community, I wish each of them every success in the years ahead. We are most grateful to their parents for entrusting them to our care; our administration and many teachers who helped in the formation of our graduates.

Father Tom