

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Today the Church throughout much of the United States commemorates the Ascension of Our Lord. In the Acts of the Apostles, we hear recounted the presence of Jesus Christ among his disciples for forty days until his return to the Father in heaven. Acts recounts Jesus Christ teaching and instructing his companions to remain in Jerusalem for the fulfillment of the promise he had given to them. An advocate, the Paraclete, would come in their midst to infuse their hearts in order to go and proclaim the Good News and perform mighty works in service of the Kingdom of God. It is interesting to note that, despite all that had taken place before them, the disciples still clung to the hope that Jesus would be the political messiah who would restore Israel's temporal power. In response, he says to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." [Acts: 1: 7-8].

These words of Jesus can help to re-assure us in our own day about the importance of trusting in God's promise to us that He will never leave us alone nor unaided. We know only too well the supreme truth that, inasmuch as we try to control our environment and everyday circumstances, it never quite works out as we expect. Two weeks ago, I spoke with the mother of one of our graduating students. She expressed sadness at the situation and how her child will not be able to experience all of the typical rituals of this important milestone and rite of passage. She began to cry; after a few moments, I said to her, "Just think, your child is unique. People will be talking about the Class of 2020 for years to come. That is something special you can hold on to." She smiled and said, "I never thought of it that way." It is important for us to remember the positive elements and the many graces we receive from unexpected and sometimes difficult and disappointing moments of life.

Servant of God, Monsignor Romano Guardini, one of the most influential Church intellectuals of the twentieth century, wrote in his book *The Lord*: "Ascension Day will be succeeded by Pentecost, and in the Holy Spirit the Apostles will speak of Christ in us." The Lord thrones at the right hand of the Father, far beyond the transitoriness of history, in calm triumphant anticipation of the overwhelming victory of Judgment once to be apparent to all.

At the same time, he is continually with us - behind every event, in the heart of every believer, in the core of collective faith, his Church. He is everywhere as power, guidance, union. When he left the historical realm of visible existence, a new Christian realm took form in the Holy Ghost: the intimate reserve of the faithful individual and the Church, give-and-take of their unity of love. Here in this inner life, Christ 'is with us even unto the consummation of the world' (Mt. 28:20)."

As the disciples ventured to Galilee and stood atop the mountain, before the Lord ascended, he instructed them, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." This commission of the disciples is ours as well; our call is to share our inheritance of faith with others. This is especially important during this and other times of crisis and uncertainty. It is natural to doubt and despair, and to ponder the future and what is coming next. We cannot deny these tendencies of our human nature. We must recognize this truth, however, within the context of a Christian reality that calls us to faith, hope, and love.

Tomorrow our national community celebrates Memorial Day. In 1971, by an act of Congress, Memorial Day, also known as "Decoration Day", was changed to be celebrated on the last Monday of May. We honor all those men and women who "gave the last, full measure" in the service of their country. I would ask that we take some time to reflect on the sacrifices made by so many in order to preserve our freedom and liberty. These gifts are not freely given; they come at a high cost and so we must preserve them and honor the legacy of those who died so we can live in a free, open, and democratic society. Civil War veteran and Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court (1902-1932) Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., in a speech entitled "In Our Youth Our Hearts Were Touched With Fire," wrote: "But grief is not the end of all; I seem to hear the funeral march become a paean. I see beyond the forest the moving banners of a hidden column. Our dead brothers still live for us, and bid us think of life, not death - of life to which in their youth they lent the passion and joy of the spring. As I listen, the great chorus of life and joy begins again, and amid the awful orchestra of seen and unseen powers and destinies of good and evil our trumpets sound once more a note of daring, hope, and will."

May we continue to pray in gratitude and thanksgiving for all of those who are working to keep us healthy and safe!

Please remember in your prayers those who have died, including Nicole Stone, Margaret Stafford, and Marie Annuzzi.

We also celebrate these milestones in the lives of our parishioners: Fr. Kyle's anniversary of Ordination to the Priesthood and the impending marriages of Chris Peters to Lauren Hagen (daughter of Kyle and Patty Hagen) and Sauradeep Sinha (one of our Stanford graduate students) to Kaitlin Bielec. Congratulations and blessings to each of you. May God's grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit sustain you in your vocations!

Fr. Tom