

## **Ascension of the Lord – 26 May 2022**

### **Luke 24:46-53**

Luke's Gospel closes with a blessing just as it had begun with the crowds waiting outside the Temple for Zechariah to bless them. Zechariah was struck dumb and the crowd waited in vain. The Risen Lord gave the blessing. Despite his physical absence, the disciples now found themselves full of joy, the joy that arises from cooperating with the divine plan. They praised God like so many in Luke's gospel who had received God's favors; they imitated the angels who had sung at this birth. The Gospel ends in the Temple where it began, but it was the disciples of Jesus, not Zechariah, who were to be the instruments of God's salvation and who could sing his Blessings.

At the end of this mass, we will also receive a blessing from the Lord, and then we are sent forth, hopefully with joy. I mention hopefully because not all in our country, will be filled with joy, since there is always the dark side of the spiritual life. Again, forces of evil will strike against goodness, even children. The little bit of joy that we receive now will never be permanent in this life, but it will in the next, and even greater.

In fact, "Eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, what God has ready for those who love him." Jesus promises to prepare a place for us. Even the disciples were reprimanded for still gazing up into the heavens after Jesus had left them. In Acts of the Apostles we read, "Why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven." So, they went back to Jerusalem.

Life continues. Back to the old routine. Ah, but then the Holy Spirit came, which we celebrate next week, and things changed for the early church. Jesus expects us to take over from here, that is why he left, but he also sent the Holy Spirit or Paraclete to guide us and give us the courage to live out this new life in Christ. And that is what we read in chapter two of Luke's two great New Testament works.

So, are we living out our new life in Christ? Even though our life in Christ begins first in each and every individual with a personal commitment, we are not expected to go it alone. We are not to be Lone Rangers, but a corporate witness called the Body of Christ. "Look how they love one another!" That

is with an *exclamation* mark not a question mark. And the head of our local Body of Christ is our Bishop, which means shepherd. Priests are members of the Presbyteral Council in each diocese and archdiocese. Presbyteral simply means "Elders." So, hopefully, when others witness our love for one another and our good works, they will say "Look how the members of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati love one another."

I remember the first time my parents taught me my first prayers, beginning with the Hail Mary. At first, I thought I was in big trouble, since they called me into our living room, alone, and told me to sit down on our couch. Then they both took seats right across from me and facing me. I knew instinctively that this was going to be a long interrogation, but for the life of me, could not figure out what I had done to merit this situation that I now found myself in.

Of course, you can imagine how surprised I was when they both said that it was time that I learned my prayers. Prayers? Which prayers, there were so many, but we did recite the rosary during Advent and Lent as a family. I was forever impressed how important God must be that my parents took the time, both of them, to personally teach me how to say my prayers. This fascination with God still lasts even today. My respect for my parents increased, especially my Mom. As I entered into my teen-years, I started asking myself, WWMD, What Would Mom Do?

When I entered the Marianist and started my first serious study of the Scriptures, especially the New Testament, I started asking myself, WWJD, or What Would Jesus Do? After my profession as a Marianist and especially when Chaminade was Beatified, I started asking, WWWJD, or What Would William Joseph Do?

After the Ascension, the early Church had to ask, "WWJD?" and then trust in the Holy Spirit to enlighten them in the answer and guide them in the right direction. The Church was never perfect since we are made up of saints and sinners. As a Pilgrim Church it has seen its bad times and even shameful times. We are the Body of Christ, so we are also made up of saints and all those who were never recognized as saints, like many of our parents.

We can continue to look up in the sky for Christ, or get busy with the Lord's work which is always the work of love.