

Ascension 2025

This Gospel or “Good News” that the apostles were to preach is first of all “news” – that is, real events, deeds. (Maybe that is why Jesus appeared over 2000 years ago rather than today, with all the ‘fake news’ that people are caught up with.) It was the continuation of the great events of the Old Testament: the creation, the fall, and the beginning stages of the redemption,, full of miracles like the exodus.

God revealed himself first of all by deeds, not just words. And the culmination of this divine revelation by deeds was Jesus himself: his Incarnation, birth, miracles, Passion, death, and Resurrection; and now the next event in the story was going to be his Ascension...

Every one of these events, except the creation, was seen by human eyes, by eyewitnesses. Our religion is not just a set of abstract spiritual truths or ideas or values or laws but concrete events, one of which the Ascension we celebrate today. The church is not a philosophy club but a chain of witnesses.

Catholic Christianity is a very material religion. It is sacramental, not purely spiritual. Those who say they are “spiritual but no religious” are labeling themselves quite accurately. They are choosing a very different religion than the religion of Jesus. His birth, miracles, Passion, death, and Resurrection were all visible, physical events. Even his last word to his Apostles, in today’s Gospel, was a physical sacramental act, raising his hands and blessing them. He blessed them with his hands, not just his heart, just as he had saved them with his Body and Blood, not just his mind.”

This is taken from Peter Kreeft’s book. He goes on, but I want to get to his next understanding. “Our modern minds,” he continues, “naturally tend to two errors: spiritualism and materialism. Spiritualism reduces all of religion to inner, spiritual things, like ideas and values and abstract principles. Spiritualism is skeptical of everything material in religion, like miracles and sacramentals and a visible Church. The opposite extreme, materialism, reduces everything to physical matter, to what our physical sciences can observe.”

A sacrament is a sign that *effects* what it signifies. This is almost from the Baltimore Catechism. A smile is sacramental. The word “happiness” is only a coded symbol for happiness, but a smile actually contains and carries happiness. Attending Mass in person is better than attending via zoom or live-streaming. Some even say they have a personal relationship with God, so they

don't need religion or need to attend Church. The problem is like a smile, which conveys happiness, where word "happiness" is only a coded symbol. If Jesus ascended into the heavens today, could we zoom or watch it via live-streaming and have the same effect? As for myself, I would rather be there in person.

Attending the Eucharist in person is sacramental, since the body of Christ, that is the Church, is especially powerful when two or three are gathered in Christ's name.