**ASCENSION SUNDAY, YEAR B**

TODAY WE HEAR ABOUT THE ASCENSION OF JESUS INTO HIS HEAVENLY GLORY, AFTER EARLIER PROMISING TO SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES, HE NOW COMMANDS THEM TO GO OUT TO THE WHOLE WORLD PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION.

JESUS DID NOT INTEND TO LEAVE THEM ALONE, AS HE PROMISED EARLIER, WHEN HE SAID “I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS YES UNTIL THE END OF TIME”

TODAYS FEAST IS A CELEBRATION OF JESUS’ FINAL GLORIFICATION AFTER HIS SUFFERING, DEATH AND RESURRECTION- A GLORY IN WHICH WE ALSO HOPE TO SHARE.

THE FIRST READING FROM ACTS GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF THE EVENT OF THE ASCENTION AS RECORDED IN THE FIRST CHAPTER. IN FACT THE AUTHOR GIVES THEOPHILUS AN ACCOUNT OF JESUS MINISTRY RIGHT UP TO THE ASCENTION.

STRANGELY THE DISCIPLES WERE STILL EXPECTING RESTORATION OF THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL. JESUS SIDE STEPS THIS QUESTION AS HE EXPLAINED “IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES AND DATES BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN HE COMES ON YOU THEN YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”

IN THE SECOND READING. PAUL EXPLAINS TO THE EPHESIANS, WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY THE THEOLOGICAL MEANING OF JESUS EXALTATION, AS HE SAYS…..MAY GOD ENLIGHTEN THE EYES OF YOUR MIND SO THAT YOU CAN SEE THE HOPE HE HOLDS FOR YOU”

THIS IS A HOPE WE ALL SHARE THAT ONE DAY WE TOO WILL BE ASCENDING TO HEAVENLY GLORY.

IT’S A HOPE THAT COMES WITH A CONDITION, WE ARE TO BE ACTIVE DISCIPLES, PLAYING OUR PART IN THE MISSION ENTRUSTED TO US BY THE ASCENDING LORD, A MISSION TO HELP PREACH THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION TO THE WHOLE WORLD, BY WORD AND DEED.

WE ALL NEED TO PLAY OUR PART TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY. FOR SOME IT WILL BE MISSIONARY WORK. FOR SOME WORKING WITH THE YOUTH. FOR OTHERS IN ACTIVE MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH, AND FOR MANY JUST BY THE EXAMPLE THEY GIVE TO OTHERS BY THE WAY THEY LEAD GOOD CHRISTIAN LIVES OF LOVE MERCY AND COMPASSION FOLLOWING JESUS COMMANDMENT TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR.

IN THE GOSPEL, JUST BEFORE HE IS TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN, JESUS TELLS THE APOSTLES TO GO OUT TO ALL THE NATIONS BAPTISING IN THE NAME OF FATHER, SON AND SPIRIT AND PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION.

TODAY, IN EFFECT, IS THE GRAND FINALE OF ALL JESUS WORDS AND WORKS DONE FOR US FOR OUR SALVATION.

IT WAS A CULMINATION BUT NOT A CONCLUSION. HE IS NOW WITH GOD THE FATHER IN GLORY, HE IS WITH US IN SPIRIT, AS WE HAVE HIS ASSURANCE THAT HE WILL BE WITH US UNTILL THE END OF TIME. OUR FEAST TODAY CELEBRATED ONE ASPECT OF THE RESURRECTION, NAMELY JESUS EXALTATION.

SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, JESUS IS IN CONTROL OF THE CONTINUING PLAN FOR SALVATION. THE NEXT PART OF HIS PLAN BEING TO SEND THE HOLY SPIRIT AT PENTECOST.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AS WE WILL HEAR NEXT WEEK, HERALDED THE START OF THE CHURCH, AS THE APOSTLES ALIVE WITH THE SPIRIT BURST, OUT OF HIDING AND BEGAN THE WORK OF SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS TO THE END OF THE EARTH. LATER THEY WERE JOINED BY PAUL WHO JESUS CHOSE AND GAVE A COMMANDING ROLE IN BUILDING THE CHURCH.

THE ASCENSION STORY WILL COME TO ITS CONCLUSION WHEN JESUS RETURNS AT THE END OF TIME TO CARRY OUT HIS FINAL JUDGEMENT.

AS FOR US NOW, WE NEED TO USE THE POWER OF THE ASCENDED LORD IN OUR LIVES. JESUS IS READY TO HELP US WITH HIS POWER WHEN WE FACE DIFFICULTIES THROUGH FEAR, WORRY, GRIEF AND PAIN. WE REMEMBER THAT JESUS EXPERIENCED ALL THESE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS.

HE HAS PROMISED TO BE WITH US AND HE HAS THE POWER TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.

THROUGH JESUS DEATH AND RESURRECTION WE BECAME RESURRECTION PEOPLE, THROUGH HIS ASCENSION WE HAVE THE HOPE, THE EXPECTATION, THAT WE WILL ALSO BE ASCENSION PEOPLE.

MAY THE BLESSING OF GOD FATHER SON AND SPIRIT BE WITH YOU ALL ON THIS GREAT FEAST DAY. LET US CELEBRATE IT TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY.

GOD BLESS AND KEEP SAFE, DEACON PAUL