

# HOMILY ~ THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

## MAY 20-21, 2023

*“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country.”* Who said that? President John F. Kennedy. When did he say that? At his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1961, 62 years ago. It was a call to action for the people of the United States to do what is right for the greater good. Maybe we need more people to remember this quote today. We do have an attitude of entitlement in this country today, isn't that right? What is in it for me? What are my rights? No one is going to tell me what to do. What is best for me? Maybe that is why nothing much is getting done in this country today. Wouldn't it be great if Congress could think what is right for the greater good rather than what is good for my party or what will get me re-elected?

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. Right before the Ascension, the Disciples saw Jesus and worshipped him; but they still doubted. After being with Jesus in a human body for three years, they still doubted. The Disciples asked: *“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?”* Jesus taught them for three years, he gave them their commission and they were still thinking that Jesus would just take care of everything for them. Two men in white garments, probably angels, suddenly stood beside them and said: *“Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? Go 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.”* They still did not understand that it was time to get on with it. Maybe the angels should have said: *“Ask not what Jesus can do for you – ask what you can do for Jesus.”*

Maybe we should be saying that to ourselves this morning. *“Ask not what Jesus can do for you – ask what you can do for Jesus.”* We do have an attitude of entitlement sometimes with Jesus. If we pray and come to Church, we think we deserve to get everything we want and have an easy life. We need to get away from the idea that we should just sit back and let Jesus take care of everything. Jesus

created this beautiful world and everything in it for us to enjoy. He suffered and died on the cross and rose for our salvation. Hasn't he done enough? We are the hands and feet of Jesus in the world today. The Ascension ends his physical presence in this world. We need to seek the help of the Holy Spirit in discerning what we are to do and how we are to do it. We would like to have an easy, carefree life, but that is not reality.

There was a 12 year old young man who one morning announced to his mother: *"I am quitting school. It is too long, too hard and too boring."* His mother looked at him right in the eye and said: *"You just described life. Get on the bus."* At times life does seem long, hard and boring. But life is very good. We have so much for which to be grateful. There is so much for which to be joyful. With God's help, we can accomplish great things. We get meaning and a sense of purpose and fulfillment from working through the challenges that life brings. In many ways, life is what you make it.

So this is your homework for this week. Sit with the statement: *"Ask not what Jesus can do for you – ask what you can do for Jesus."* I cannot answer that question for you. You will have to answer that question for yourself with the help of the Holy Spirit. That may be preaching, but it also may be reconciling with family members or friends, volunteering at St. Edith, doing service projects and volunteering in the greater community, fighting against prejudice and discrimination of all kinds, developing your charisms so that you can use them to serve others, contributing to charities that are doing important work, just to name a few. What can you do for Jesus?

Love and Peace,

Fr. Jim