

HOMILY ~ ASCENSION OF THE LORD

June 1, 2025

(Stand staring up at the ceiling for 45 seconds) You are starting to get a little uncomfortable or maybe even annoyed with me, aren't you? I was kind of waiting for the two men in white to appear and tell me to stop staring at the ceiling. Don't you want to see them? If I keep doing this, we will never be able to move forward and you will have to be here all day. But this is exactly what the disciples were doing in the first reading today, weren't they? They were just standing there staring into the sky. It was time for them to get on with the work they were called to do. I think Jesus had to ascend to the Father so the disciples would get on with the ministry that Jesus was calling them to do. Up to this point the disciples did not do a lot. When Jesus was alive in a human body they traveled with him, listened to his teachings, observed his behavior and his miracles, but that was about it. After the Resurrection during the post resurrection appearances, they pretty much remained locked in the upper room for fear of the Jews. In the first reading, they asked him if he was now going to restore the kingdom of Israel. They still expected him to take care of everything for them. After the Ascension, they finally realized that they had to be his hands and feet in the world. He had to step back so the disciples would step forward. We know what that is like. I think that is probably the most difficult thing that parents have to do, step back, let your children have more and more independence so they can move forward. Let them make some mistakes so they can learn from them. If you do not step back, your children will never launch. I learned that very quickly when I became a pastor. My job was to get things started and then step back and let people take over and they can do great things. If everything depended upon me, little would get done.

The disciples still think that Jesus is going to restore the kingdom of Israel. How many times has Jesus told them that his kingdom is not of this world? I think we need to be reminded that our kingdom is not of this world either. We sometimes forget that. We are destined to live for all eternity with God in heaven. If our kingdom was of this world, our

lives would be all about fame, wealth and power. That is what has caused so many problems in this world, the total pursuit of fame, wealth and power. Think about it. We have to take care of business, but our lives need to be primarily about loving and serving our neighbor and treating all human beings with dignity and respect. It is not all about what is good for me, what do I get out of it. That is not what Jesus did.

Jesus is calling us today to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. We all need to do our part. To do this we need to connect with other people. We need to put down our phones and our devices and connect with other people. That is a great start. We also need to preach always and use words if you must. Treating people with loving kindness goes a long way. Jesus taught us how to live our lives not just with words, but by example. And personal invitations to come to church are extremely important. Maybe don't invite people to Mass right away. Maybe invite people to the Parish Picnic. Maybe invite people to participate in one of our service projects. Maybe invite people to come to a spaghetti dinner. Maybe bring people to Mass with you and explain a few things to them and help them to participate. None of us can single handedly change the world but when we all do our part it makes a difference. It is all important. I was reading the other day that on one occasion when President Kennedy visited NASAW many years ago, a janitor told him that he was helping put a man on the moon. It sounds kind of funny but it is true. A whole gang of people put a man on the moon. It did not happen because a small number of people were after fame, wealth and power. It was about many people serving one another and treating one another with dignity and respect. So let's get on with the work that Jesus commissions us to do once again today. Everyone's contributions make a difference.