

The Ascension of Our Lord

Fessahaye Mebrahtu

The Church allows parishes to celebrate Ascension of Our Lord on Sunday following the traditional celebration of the Feast of Ascension, i.e., Thursday, 40th day after Easter. Celebrating Church feasts during the week continues to be a challenge; therefore, the Church is lenient to accommodate. Therefore, for Sunday, May 16 we do have two option of readings, the first option being readings for the Feast of Ascension and the second one for the 7th Sunday of Easter. The themes being similar, my reflection will be inclusive of all. As much as the readings focus on the Ascension of the Risen Lord into heaven, they also remind us about the gifts of God in us that need to be witnessed and shared.

In the first reading, the author of the Gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles, is believed to be Luke the Evangelist (writer of the Gospel). Luke introduces the Acts of the Apostles addressing to Theophilus, who could be an individual by the same name. However, theologians interpret “Theophilus” is us, all people who love God and accept the new teaching of Jesus Christ the risen Lord. Yes, we are invited to love the Lord, because he loved us first. St. John in his first letter states, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we must love one another.” We are called live in the circle and reciprocity of love. Jesus’ prayer for us is to remain in love with Him and with one another “consecrated in truth.”

The letters of St. Paul focus on Christian virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Christian virtues of faith, hope and love anchor us to the foundation of our existence and faith. The gifts of the Holy Spirit on the other hand are about reaching out, witnessing and sharing the good news. We have to respond to the order Jesus gave to his disciples, “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature.” Mark is inclusive that our mission is “to every creature.” This challenge gives an opportunity to pause and reflect, especially where and when discrimination against fellow human beings is rampant and environmental abuse endangers the very existence of human existence and the viability of life in our “lonely planet.” Jesus offer us to his Father in his prayer to protect us and we are in turn called to protect the world we are in.

Our city suffering “under siege of violence and senseless killing” needs to hear the good news of the risen Lord and the promise of the Holy Spirit to bring about “love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.” We need to be bold enough to say “enough to violence, enough to discrimination, enough to environmental abuse,” all of which come from the evil one Jesus prayed to protect us. In Jesus logic, self-preservation hinges on selfless giving, going out of ourselves even if it hurts, ostracizes or even endangers our very-self “building up the body of Christ.”