

FROM THE PASTOR'S



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD May 24, 2009 B

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Today, we celebrate Jesus' return to his Father in heaven.

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God (Mk 24:19).

When we hear the phrase "took his seat at the right hand of God," it is not intended to paint heaven as some place in the sky where Jesus is seated by God's right hand. The phrase is intended to communicate that Jesus, the glorified Christ, is Lord of the universe and is equal in power and dignity to God the Father. From there he constantly intercedes for us with his Father.

The Ascension event concludes Jesus' ministry on earth. Christ's Ascension brought his human body and soul into the Trinity. As a result of the Ascension, the second Person of the Trinity is forever human as well as divine.

The Ascension event does not mean that Jesus has abandoned us. The last words of Matthew's gospel has Jesus saying: "Know that I will be with you always until the end of time." Jesus is present to us through the Holy Spirit, in and through the liturgical celebrations of our Church, and wherever two or three are gathered in his name.

Ascension Day is also our parish feast day. The first Mass in our parish was celebrated on Sunday, November 29, 1959. As you know, we are preparing for our Golden Jubilee Celebration which will be held on **Sunday, November 22, 2009, at the 11:30am Mass**. I am grateful to Sister Immaculata and her Jubilee Committee for overseeing this important celebration in the history of our parish.

The Ascension event is the Second Glorious Mystery of the Rosary. When I pray this decade, I have three intentions.

- for the living and deceased members of our parish family.
- in thanksgiving for all the men and women who help make our parish a vibrant one by generously sharing their time, treasure and talent.
- for parishioners going through a tough time.

I find the Rosary to be a wonderful way to pray for a wide range of global, church and personal intentions.

Carrying on the mission

In today's gospel, Jesus calls on his disciples and us to carry on his mission by following in his footsteps. Reflecting on this message, Jay Cormier has written a piece called **Margaret's Shoes**.

To be a practicing Catholic in 16th century England was dangerous. In the wake of Henry VIII's and Elizabeth I's insistence on being recognized as the sole head of the Church, Parliament enacted several severe anti-Catholic laws. The celebration of the "Roman" Mass was made illegal—priests were hunted down, arrested and executed. To shelter a priest, to teach the Catholic faith, to provide any aid or support to the outlaw religion were considered treason, punishable by death.

There are many stories of brave English Catholics who kept the faith alive in England and paid the ultimate price. First among the martyrs of England and Wales was St. Margaret Clitherow of Yorkshire. This valiant woman was hanged in 1586 at the age of 33 for harboring priests and hearing Mass in her home. Married to a Yorkshire butcher, Margaret also ran a small—and illegal—school for children in her home. She spent more than a decade in and out of prison—released once only long enough for the birth of one of her children.

Finally, in March of 1586, a raid on the Clitherow house revealed the existence of a priest's hiding place in the attic as well as chalices, missals and vestments. Margaret was arrested, imprisoned and formally charged. She refused to consent to a trial: "Having made no offense, I need no trial," she said. The court had little choice in the matter but to find her guilty and sentence her to death.

From her prison cell the night before she died, Margaret made a final request: She left her shoes to her eldest daughter, Anne, who was then 12 years old. The message from mother to daughter was clear: Follow in my footsteps; the wordless gift said, carry on.

Today, Jesus leaves us his "shoes". He calls us to carry on his Gospel of compassion, reconciliation and justice; he entrusts to us the work of resurrection. In

Baptism, every Christian of every time and place takes on the role of witness to all that Jesus did and taught: We are witnesses not only in our articulating the powerful words of the Gospel but in the quiet, simple, but no-less powerful expressions of compassion and love that echo the same compassion and love of God-God who is Father and Son and Brother and Sister to us all.

Memorial Day reflection

This weekend we pause to remember the men and women who have died in the service of our country. We remember them and their loved ones. We also remember all those who were injured and their loved ones. The following is a Memorial Day reflection.

We honor on Memorial Day the memory of all those men and women who gave their lives for their country by dying in war. It is no exaggeration to say that almost all of them were courageous people who loved their country, who gave unselfishly of their own persons for the sake of American ideals. Most of them were young. It is fitting that we honor them.

It is ironic, perhaps tragic, that most of the countries against which we have warred have similar celebrations. They too honor the memory of the men and women who died in battle for their country. It is probably accurate to state that almost all of them were courageous, unselfish people who loved their country and its ideals. Most of them, too, were very young.

Courageous, loving, unselfish young people continue to kill one another in battle in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and other places. Almost everyone says that they don't want to do it, that they will use every possible means to bring about peace and justice without killing. They probably mean it. That same "everyone" also says at some point that they have no other alternative, that unfortunately they have to go to war.

Mohandas Gandhi taught that killing a human being is an absolutely irrevocable act. Once done, its effects cannot be undone. Because it is absolute and final, a person should have absolute certitude before doing it. But human beings can never have absolute certitude. Gandhi concluded that it is unreasonable therefore, to kill human beings. He would use no violence.

Does the teaching of Jesus agree with this radical thinking? Is this what he meant when he instructed us to "turn the other cheek," to "love our enemies"? Christianity as a whole hasn't been able to answer

that yet, but it does seem more plausible than thinking that Jesus taught that it is sometimes necessary for these courageous, loving, and unselfish young people to kill one another. (Author unknown)

Take Your Oxygen First

PROTECTING YOUR HEALTH and HAPPINESS

WHILE CARING for a LOVED ONE

with MEMORY LOSS

The above named book is a vital source for anyone on the caregiving journey. One of the authors Leeza Gibbons, a news journalist and her family open their hearts to candidly share their experience of caring for Leeza's mother as she battled Alzheimer's disease. The other two authors of the book are James Huysman, PsyD, LCSW and Rosemary DeAngelis Laird M.D. Rosemary and her family are members of Ascension Parish. The book reveals how you can harness, the Three E's: Education, Empowerment and Energy, to make the most of your caregiving journey. Congratulations Dr. Rosemary, we are very proud of you.

Have a blessed week,

