

- There is something comforting about going home after a long, difficult day at work or school. If you ever had “one of those days” you know what I mean. Maybe everything and everyone around you seemed a little crazy. Maybe you were trying to explain something and no one listened. Maybe someone you counted on let you down. Maybe you got blamed for something you didn’t do.
- Then you get home: a feeling of escape from the madness; you eat something; go for a walk or bike ride; flop into your favorite chair with the TV remote. You get a sense of separation from the chaos!!
- Today is Ascension Thursday. Jesus ascends to heaven. He goes home.
- Sometimes I think of this image of Jesus arriving back in heaven. Waiting to greet Him is God the Father, some prophets and a few saints. And Jesus flops down on His favorite chair and says “ Wow, its good to be home. Those people down there can be crazy. Many of them didn’t believe a word I said. One of my best friends turned on me. And did you see how they just treated me in Jerusalem? I’m glad to be back here. So where’s the TV remote”.
- Fortunately for us that’s not what happened at Jesus ascension. Jesus was not going home and leaving us alone. *Jesus didn’t ascend to escape us.* He’s not separating Himself from humanity the way we can separate ourselves from work or school at the end of a bad day.
- In fact if we look closely at two Gospel readings, last Sunday’s Gospel and today’s Gospel, we get to see what Jesus’ ascension is all about.
- Last Sunday we heard Jesus tell us things like: “ I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” and “ You are in me and I in you”. These are not the words of someone about to leave us alone, are they?
- Last Sunday we heard the first part of the Ascension message. We were told Jesus’ ascension is not an end at all. It is an ongoing relationship to be lived out in an all-new way. In prayer, in Eucharist, in our loving relationships with others – He is present in all of these.

- Today's Gospel gives us the second part of the Ascension message. We are told that the Ascension is not a leaving - it is a sending. We are sent to be Jesus' disciples in this world. Sent with the full knowledge that Jesus is present, we are never alone!! God loves us and is intimately involved in our lives. Each of us is called to discipleship, in one form or another. That doesn't necessarily mean trying to be John the Baptist in preaching repentance to everyone. But it does mean trying to be a better Christian, so that Jesus may be seen working through us in our thoughts, words, and actions. We are sent to teach others what Jesus taught us: Love God with all your heart and love each other. And what a great honor this is: To be chosen by God, you and me, to bring His love, His presence to other people.
- Edith Stein was a young, Jewish woman who stopped believing in God at age 14. But at age 31 she converted to Christianity and entered a religious order taking the name "Teresa Benedicta of the Cross". Today we know her as Saint Teresa Benedicta. In 1942 she was arrested and sent to a concentration camp in Nazi Germany. While there, she preached the hope and love of Christ before being put to death with other "Jewish Christians". Shortly before her death, she wrote these words, which capture the essence of what it means to be sent into the world to bring the love of Christ. She wrote:
 - "God dwells in each of us and God is love, therefore we must love each other. Our love for our brothers and sisters is the measure of our love for God. For Christians there are no strangers, only neighbors. It makes no difference if a person is related to us, whether we like them or not, whether we see them as worthy of help or not. The love of Christ knows no bounds, it never ceases. It is in us and we must do as He did".
 - These are truly words to live by. .
 - In our first reading today, we see Jesus' Apostles looking up in amazement as "he was lifted up before their eyes, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1: 1-11).
 - Suddenly two men dressed in white say to them "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up to heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall come in the same way as you have seen him going up to heaven".

- In other words, "Stop standing around gawking, and wondering when Christ might come back, and get busy with what He wants you to do!" And that applies to *all of us* as well, each in our own ways.

God bless you!!!