

**SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION 2014**  
**SERMON - CHRIST CHURCH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**ACTS 1.1 LUKE 24.49 I ST. PETER 4.7**



The last glimpse of Jesus the disciples saw was the bottom of his bare feet...being taken up into a cloud...surrounded by bright white light.

Salvador Dali's surrealist painting *The Ascension of Christ*...the insert in this morning's bulletin...depicts the Ascension as the disciples would have seen it...looking straight up into the sky...as Jesus was taken up into heaven. Dali's picture draws us into the scene. We are no longer spectators watching the Ascension from a distance. We are standing there with the disciples looking straight up into heaven...looking at Jesus' bare feet...until he is taken up into the cloud and hidden from us.

We are further drawn to the Ascension during the reading of the Gospel...we paused briefly at the point Saint Luke tells us Jesus departed from the disciples and was taken up into heaven...the Paschal Candle that has been lighted throughout the Easter Season was extinguished...it is our liturgical reenactment of Jesus' final departure from Earth in his resurrected and glorified body and his return to the Father.

During his last few days with his disciples before the Ascension, Jesus kept telling them he was going to be leaving them again...he was going back to his Father who had sent him. They did not understand what he meant by all of this talk about going back to the Father. They could not possibly have understood what he meant when he then told them his going away was for their own good. It was for our good too he went back to heaven.

Jesus returned to the Father and took his entire body, bare feet and all, with him. Before he left them he gave them a blessing and told them not to be discouraged because he was leaving. While we may not be able to physically see Jesus at this very moment, Matthew records his promise to the disciples he would always be with them. He has promised us too he is always with us...until the end of time...until he comes back. And he will come back!

Jesus told the disciples God the Father has his own timetable for working things out...and they should not concern themselves with trying to guess God's schedule. Instead, they should wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit he promised he would send them who would empower them to be his witnesses...to go out to every corner of the world. The disciples didn't understand what Jesus meant and watched in amazement as he was swallowed up by the cloud and bright white light.

The disciples witnessed the Ascension of Jesus into heaven first-hand, but they could not of understood, at least not at that moment, what it

was all about. All they knew is that they had seen something that defied explanation. Acts tells us that they stood looking up into the sky, their eyes fixed, unable to fathom what they had just seen. But things would be made clear to them soon.

We do have an advantage over the disciples because we know what happened next and why we are happy Jesus went back to heaven. The Ascension of Jesus gives us a preview of our own ascensions into heaven. We will take our own bodies...resurrected and glorified bodies to be certain...but still our own bodies...bare feet and all...to heaven.

The angels promised we would see Jesus come back one day in the same way he left...surrounded by white clouds and bright light. We are not supposed to know when that will occur. But we are supposed to live our lives as if it were to happen this very moment...and to make certain we are prepared. We get ourselves prepared for the day Jesus comes back by continuing to do his work...using the gifts God has given to each of us for that purpose.

In the Epistle for the Sunday after the Ascension, Peter gives us some practical advice on how we can be effective witnesses for Jesus until he comes back. We must be self-controlled, alert, and pray continuously. Our love for each other must be sincere, because love covers over many sins. We must be good managers of the different gifts God has given us. We should always show hospitality toward others. We should pray for peace throughout the world.

Our prayer is that Jesus will hurry up and come back. We look forward with hope and expectation to that day. In the meantime, we should not just stare up at the sky and wait for something to happen. We have work to do and God has given us the help we need to accomplish his work.

Let's get busy!

