

# Sunday after Ascension 2023

## Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

### Father Craig Looney

*1 Peter 4.7-11      St. John 15.26-16.4*



**Mission Accomplished**...his work on Earth complete...Jesus had a few more words of encouragement for his disciples. The Gospel for Ascension Days tells us he told them to go back to Jerusalem and wait for further instructions. Then he lifted up his hands...God's hands...blessed them...and was taken up into heaven. The last glimpse the disciples had of Jesus was his feet.

Luke ends his Gospel with this remarkable account of Jesus being taken up into heaven to sit at God's right hand. Jesus is sitting down because his work is done. The little baby boy born in a barn in Bethlehem grew up and was obedient to Mary and Joseph. He taught and healed, suffered and died, was raised from the dead.

In Psalm 47 we read...

*...God goes up to this throne. There are shouts of joy and the blast of trumpets, as the Lord goes up. Sing praise to God; sing praise to our king! God is king over all the world; praise him with songs!*

During the reading of the Gospel at our Ascension Day Mass, we extinguished the Paschal Candle that was lighted at the Easter Even Vigil...and has burned at every Mass throughout the Easter Season. We acted out liturgically what we heard in the Gospel about Jesus being taken up to heaven.

The Light that is Christ can never be put out. He is the Light of John's Gospel that came into the World; and the powers of darkness can never overcome him. Even though we can't see Jesus physically, he promises us in Matthew's Gospel he will always be with us each and every day of our lives, until the end of time.

The Ascension of Jesus into heaven is the beginning of the end of time. Peter tells us in the Epistle we are living in the end times. He doesn't say this to frighten us. He says this so we can get ready for the day Jesus comes back. We don't know when Jesus will return and he tells us not to try to figure out God's timetable. How do we get ready for that day?

We can start by paying attention to what our friend, Peter, tells us; we are to be good managers of God's gifts...

*...We must be self-controlled, alert, and pray continuously,*

*....Our love for each other must be deep and sincere, because love covers many sins,*

*...We must always show hospitality toward each other and do so gladly,*

*...Each of us has a special gift from God. We must be good stewards of our gifts and always use them for the good of others.*

Peter and the others who witnessed first-hand the Ascension of Jesus didn't yet understand what they had seen. Their minds and eyes would be opened to the truth...they would be empowered by the Holy Spirit. They would then know their mission was to be witnesses for Jesus. For the moment, they could only stand on the hillside looking up at Jesus' feet until they couldn't see him any more.

The fact they saw Jesus' feet tells us something about what our own ascensions will be like. Jesus took his body back to heaven with him. So will we. We will not live in heaven as disembodied spirits...we will have glorified and perfected bodies. Our bodies will be different...but we will somehow be able to recognize each other.

We don't need to worry about living in the end times because we believe Jesus has gone to his Father's house to make room for us, so one day we might join him there. We need to get ourselves ready to receive the special gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. He will help us, just as he did the disciples, to be good witnesses for Jesus, today and every day of our lives. That means living our lives as if Jesus was to return right now, this very minute. Are we ready?

Jesus' mission is complete. Our mission has only just begun. Our friend, Peter tells us to get busy using the gifts God has given us...to spread the Good News about Jesus...and to always use our gifts for the good of others.

When Jesus returns we want to be ready for him. He will take us back to heaven with him and he will say to each of us, "Well done. Mission Accomplished!"

