

Fullness

The wonderful reality in knowing Jesus, believing in Jesus, trying to follow Jesus is discovered when we experience the love of God in Jesus in all creation. Jesus unites heaven and earth. Jesus incarnates the God of infinite space to every speck of dust and life on this “fragile earth, our island home.” Jesus makes us all brothers and sisters in one human family.

This is the “fullness” Saint Paul writes about in the 1st chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. Jesus “fills all in all.” It is this fullness we celebrate tonight on the Feast of the Ascension, exactly 40 days after Easter Sunday.

The specific event we call the Ascension is a great mystery. According to the Book of Acts, Jesus “was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.” Luke’s gospel reports that Jesus, “while he was blessing them ... withdrew from them and was carried into heaven...” As in response to so many of the biblical accounts we ask “How ... how did this happen; how can this happen?” “Why did this happen?” is the more important question.

Jesus was lifted up to return to God the Father because he had come from God the Father. He reigns with God because the Father and the Son are one. Jesus was lifted up so that he might fill all things in heaven and earth. There is no limit to his presence, his power.

He withdrew from his disciples physically so that they might receive power spiritually – the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Ascension is the link between the new life giving power of the Resurrection and the new life giving power of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost. The Ascension unites Jesus’ mission on earth to the Church’s mission on earth. The disciples are the first witnesses, sent from Jerusalem, empowered by the Spirit to the “ends of the earth.”

Teach, baptize, make disciples. Jesus instructs and blesses before he leaves. His physical absence creates His spiritual presence. This is the gift of Ascension – the fullness of his spiritual presence. Now we are instructed to be witnesses and are blessed by the Lord to carry on His mission.

Grace is the fullness of Jesus’ love, God’s love freely given for all. We are called to bring this love to all those who experience emptiness, loss; to those who have lost the feeling of fullness, the feeling of community. We are witnesses to the broken, to those living without love, without hope, without faith. We are the body of Christ on earth – here and now.