

THE EMMAUS SERIES

Ascension, Year B

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:17-23

Mark 16:15-20

'I am with you always' – the Paschal Mystery is the life of the pilgrim Church

From the moment of his resurrection triumph, the Saviour was living in the bosom of the Father. The faith of the Church had its beginnings in meetings with the Risen Lord – in which he 'showed himself alive' and 'told them about the kingdom of God' - preparing them for the great mission that would be theirs. Today's celebration reminds us that these meetings finally came to an end – after 'forty days', as Luke puts it in our reading from Acts. Luke is preparing us for what will occur after 'not many days': at the Pentecostal celebration, fifty days after the Passover.

Jesus is not abandoning his friends. On the contrary, he tells them to look forward to 'what the Father has promised'. When they are 'baptised with the Holy Spirit' – the Spirit who is the very expression of the life he shares with the Father – he will be with them in all that they are called to be and do. The Lord's new presence will fill with new life the Church which is about to be launched forth on its mission - to bring the power and blessings of the Lord's Paschal Mystery 'to the ends of the earth' (Luke), 'to all creation' (Mark).

According to the Gospel of Luke the angels tell the disciples not to seek the Lord 'in the sky', but to take up the mission they have received, to be his 'witnesses' throughout their world. The era of the pilgrim Church that is about to begin – the angels tell them - will end when Jesus returns, and the Church's life in faith and sacraments gives way to the absolute fulfilment of the final Kingdom.

Our readings describe the task of the Church as it journeys through history towards the final Kingdom, bringing the 'Good News to all creation'. Its life together - in the power of the Resurrection - should be a living sign, confirming the message it brings. 'Charity, selflessness, gentleness and patience' should be an expression of the 'unity of the Spirit' – the unity which only God can give, the unity of the 'one Body' of Christ, the unity of those who know that they are called together by the 'one God who is Father of all'.

United, through their 'baptism', in the blessings of the Paschal Mystery, Church members should share the many gifts they receive from 'the one who rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things'. Doing so they will show their world the pattern of authentic human fulfilment, in 'the fullness of Christ'

On Ascension Day we celebrate our Christian hope - where Jesus, our brother and our Lord has gone we shall follow. The pilgrim Church must bring to our struggling world the Good News that, through his Paschal Mystery, the Saviour calls the whole of the human family to live forever with him in the bosom of the Father

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