

The Solemnity of the Ascension may seem almost anticlimactic. Our churches were jammed for Easter but are less so for the Ascension. Nevertheless, the mystery of the Ascension is in the creed because it proclaims some powerful truths.

First, the Ascension is about Jesus returning into the Father's glory. Jesus' Ascension reminds us that now he cannot be captured by any one country or culture. He is Lord of all nations. He is no longer bound to any one language. He can be reached in any language.

+In confession, I may not always understand accents, but he can and that is the guarantee of forgiveness.

Ascension Day is the perfect church holiday because the world can't hijack it. The culture around us has somewhat wrecked the original meaning of Christmas and Easter with its consumeristic agendas.

+Marva Dawn writes, "In my teen years I played clarinet in the high school band for the town Christmas parade at which Santa Claus was flown in by helicopter. Later, I heard, they flew the bunny in for Easter. But the world hasn't got the foggiest notion what to do with someone flying out."

He really did not fly away, but entered into a new dimension, a dimension beyond space and time. Which means, he is available anytime, anywhere. Cell phone companies like to brag about how great their coverage is.

When Jesus was on earth, he could not compete with the cell phone coverage, as his ministry had a tightly defined geographical mission focused in the tiny Roman province of Judea. If you were in Italy, too bad.

But now, through the Ascension, Jesus has risen into heaven, and his glory and power extends over the entire world. You can be in Nigeria or Virginia and call upon him with no worries of dropped calls. Wherever you are—Jesus is there for you. An unlimited data plan with no hidden fees! *You can keep those sacred cell phones on in church.

Our experience of Christ is not like that of the disciples who saw him, touched him and ate with him. Our experience of the Risen Lord is like that of the billions since then who have not seen with their eyes but have real contact with Christ through faith, the sacraments, prayer and the life of the Church.

+He speaks to us in the scriptures, raises us to new life in baptism, renews us in confirmation, eats and drinks with us in the Eucharist and he still forgives us and heals us. On top of that, he loves weddings!

That is why Jesus gives the great commission to spread the Gospel. People will now encounter Jesus through the life of the Church. He is with us with the same redeeming power and cleansing love as he was with the Apostles but in a different way.

The feast also says something about the human body. The amazing truth of the ascension is that a human body has entered heaven. A human body has entered glory. A human body will live forever.

A human body is forever in the very presence of God. Not only did Jesus take on every aspect of humanity, he took it on forever. He did not take it off as he entered heaven! His mother soon followed, as will we one day.

When Jesus returns, we will one day sit next to him with our bodies and all our scars. What we carry around now will be glorified – no more diets needed. St. Augustine thinks we will be around 30 something – the age of our Lord. He believes children remain children, just no more complaining.

Hopefully you can see that the Ascension is not only about Jesus but also about us. Where Jesus is now we hope someday to be. As he promised, “I am going to prepare a place for you.” Although the life journey for each of us is different, our destination is the same, union with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For some people that journey may be short or long. It may have much suffering and challenges. It may be difficult and demanding, but we are united in that all of us are striving to arrive at the same destination (At least, we hope!).

The Ascension shows us that our life here on earth does not fully define who we are. It is not a complete picture. It is not the whole truth. You might recall from Scripture, when Jesus performed a great miracle, he asked that they tell no one, because the complete picture would only be understood when he died and then rose from the dead. The same is true of us. We have an immense glory ahead of us to be where Jesus is. Heaven is not some alien place but our true home with Christ in all his glory

+There was a little girl who walked to her house through the cemetery every day after school. She loved to feel the breeze in her hair and to watch the birds. Sometimes she just threw herself on the green grass and watched the clouds turn into figures of her imagination.

As she skipped around gravestones, she whistled her favorite tunes and sang songs. At times she knelt, and read the names and dates on the tombstones, and slid her fingers over the beautiful pieces of granite. One day her friends asked her, "Why do you walk through the cemetery every day?" She answered, "Because, it's the way home".

Where Jesus now is, we hope someday to be. The Ascension, this neglected mystery, teaches us that we have a future larger and more enduring than this world.

We will last longer than the mountains, the sun and the stars; in Christ, we will share the very life and eternity of God.

+And if you missed visiting other countries or just never had the opportunity, Jesus will take you on a flyover!

Because Jesus returned to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit, he is more than an example or a page in history. He is now close to every one of us. That is why after the Ascension, the Apostles returned to the Temple praising God and that is why we are here today.

The Ascension, then, is not about absence but about the new, spiritual presence of Christ to all of us, wherever we are, through the Holy Spirit. Now, the Risen Jesus is as close to us as the beating of our heart. The Ascension means that Jesus is gone from our sight but not from our life. So I say to you, "Happy Ascension!"