

## HOMILY FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

MAY 20, 2007 - Joseph Nangle OFM

### Introduction

It has always seemed to me that the Feast of the Ascension is uniquely ours - yours and mind - we who come after Jesus, long after Him. To explain:

#### I

Think of the word we just heard in the first reading today from Acts of the Apostles. Jesus' disciples were standing there looking up, sort of wondering what had just happened as he disappeared from their sight. Immediately they sensed the presence of two people who asked them "People of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?"

In other words, Jesus is gone. The work is now in your hands. Words, I believe, that apply as much to us as to those first followers of Jesus who heard them.

So this is a feast day that is uniquely ours. We are the ones called to carry on the work of Jesus today.

#### II

Another way of saying this is that we stand in the time of the "already and not yet". We so often proclaim this at Mass: "Christ has [ALREADY] died; Christ has [ALREADY] risen; Christ has [NOT YET] come again".

#### III

This has at least two very practical consequences for us, one on a personal level, the other on the level of our parish life.

On the personal level we have the clear vocation to do what Jesus did - to proclaim and promote the Reign of God, which as you know, was the principal theme of Jesus' preaching and action. That Reign where violence at every level of life is overcome and eliminated; where poverty in its every dimension is replaced by sufficiency for all; and where the earth is revered and conserved as our God-given home.

To the question for each of us in this "already and not yet" time comes down to: am I in my family life, in my social circles, in my professional world promoting God's Reign of dignity, unity, freedom, peace, justice and love for all?

On the level of our parish the Ascension event reminds us that we are called to be an exemplar, a model, a metaphor of God's Reign - a place where these values of God's Reign are made visible. The parish, therefore, is so much more than a place where we

have our spiritual needs taken care of, where we drop in once in a while or consistently for a bit of inspiration or consolation.

The parish has a much more significant role much more crucial and relevant in a culture which is so me-centered, so materialistically oriented, so hedonistic - or as Pope John Paul II stated, a culture of death.

Our Lady Queen of Peace Parish is a work in progress in this regard. We need to keep on pushing toward the ideal of God's dream for humanity, God's Reign, the New Creation. So on this our feast day we think again of those words spoken to Jesus' disciples as they see him disappear from their sight: "People, why are you standing there looking up at the sky". And let me cite similar words spoken by St. Francis of Assisi to his disciples toward the end of his life: "I have done what was mine to do; may you do what is yours".