

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD



I was asked by a friend of mine to anoint his father because he was sick and so I went to the house of his father. When I arrived, I anointed his father and after the anointing, the father gathered together his children and gave them instructions on what to do if he will be no longer with them. Even myself, the father told me to help his children.

This was also what Jesus did to his disciples before he ascended to heaven, because today we are celebrating the Solemnity of His Ascension, on what to do after he will ascend into heaven. He gave them instruction on what to do. Jesus had disappeared from their eyes physically but he had left a mission in their hands. This is what Jesus had instructed to them: “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria and to ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8); “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations....

And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you...” (Mtt 28:19-20); “repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all the nations,” (Lk 24:47). These instructions are their mission to the whole world.

Over the centuries, many thousands of missionaries have literally followed Jesus’ missionary instructions. Because of what they did, you and I became Christians Catholics today.

Ascension reminds us also of two important things we should have in life, that is, **to look up** or **to look up to God and to look down our eyes at people**. Let us look up to God especially in making important decisions in our lives, to pray for his guidance on what to do with our lives. We should also learn to look down our eyes at people and be ready to help them. A saint said that when we are inside the church, we closed our hands in prayer but when we go out from the church, we open our hands to help other people.

Jesus is no longer physically present to us but he is spiritually present in our midst, in what way? There are proofs that Jesus is present to us even up to today, lives with us and lives among us. According to Bishop Villegas in his homily book *Love Like Jesus* said the word to remember about Christ’s presence in us is the word SWAMPS. SWAMPS stand for:

S stands for **Sacrament**. Christ is present when we celebrate the Eucharist. Christ was present when we were baptized. Christ is present when we are confirmed. Christ is present when a man and a woman exchange vows with each other. Christ is present when a priest is ordained. Christ is present when a sick person is anointed. That is why the Eucharist is called the Sacrament of real Presence. We do not only receive symbols but we receive the real thing exchange vows. It is the real presence of the Lord. Every time we celebrate the Eucharist and the sacraments Christ is present and visits us.

W stands for **Word** of God. The word of God is living and true. That is why Peter could exclaim to the Lord: "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have the words of everlasting life." Every time we read the scriptures and when the lector reads the word of God, it is Christ who becomes present.

A stands for **Assembly** because the Lord said: "When two or three are gathered in my name, I will be there in their midst." Every time we gather just like what we are doing now, the Lord is not only present in the Word or altar as Eucharist, the Lord is truly present in this Church because we are gathered in the name of Jesus. Every time we say: "Father, we gather in the name of Jesus" Jesus becomes present and becomes our guest of honor.

M stands for **Minister** or Servant. Christ is present in the bishop, in the priest, in the deacon, in the catechist, in the lay cooperator, in the reader and all those who serve the church. But Christ is present in a special way in the ordained minister. Even if I look like this, God has chosen this body and this lip to speak to you.

P stands for **Prayer**. Christ is present not only when we assemble in a community. Christ is present when we pray quietly, behind locked doors. He is present in our solitude, when we meditate, when we contemplate, when we are face with our God. When we listen to our conscience and nobody else is around, God is there. When we are in the presence of nature, looking at the mountains and the seas, God is there.

Lastly, **S** stands for **Service**. Service is love. Service is forgiveness because the Lord said: "Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me." Every person is created in the image and likeness of God. What we do to others – the lost, the least and the last among us we do to God. Let us remember what St. Bernard of Clairvoux said: "Service will not come without reward. But serving others will come without thought of any reward."

Let us remember this word when we go home that SWAMPS stands for **S**acraments, **W**ord, **A**ssembly, **M**inister, **P**rayers and **S**ervice

AMEN