

Father O'Connor's Homily on 17 May 2026
Feast of the Ascension of the Lord-A

Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11
Ephesians 1: 17-23
Matthew 28: 16-20

I came across an article this week that caught my attention. And the gist of which I would like to share with you today. It is called, **“How Christ’s Ascension Takes the Training Wheels Off Our Faith,”** by Father Roger Landry. Here are some of his thoughts.

<https://www.ewtnnews.com/world/us/how-christs-ascension-takes-the-training-wheels-off-our-faith>

Christ’s Ascension is meant to help us respond to His confidence in making us His missionaries, together with the Holy Spirit, to renew the face of the earth.

Jesus could have stayed on earth until the end of time as the Good Shepherd, crisscrossing the globe for every lost sheep, and saving them one by one. As He ascended, however, He placed his own mission in our hands, commanding us to “go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15).

He took the training wheels off our discipleship and removed any excuses we might have to pass the buck of sharing and spreading the faith. “You will be my witnesses,” He told us, “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

His confidence and trust in us, despite all our weaknesses, is astonishing. He wanted to actually entrust to us His mission of the redemption of the world.

But He didn’t leave us orphans (cf. Jn 14:18).

Saint Luke tells us that Jesus “led them out as far as Bethany, raised His hands, and blessed them. As He was blessing them, He parted from them and was taken up to heaven” (Lk 24:50-51).

Jesus departed in the very act of blessing us. Pope Benedict XVI (in his trilogy, “Jesus of Nazareth”) commented on how the risen Jesus in heaven is perpetually blessing us.

“Jesus departs in the act of blessing,” he states. “He goes while blessing, and He remains in that gesture of blessing. His hands remain, stretched out over this world ... [which] expresses Jesus’ continuing relationship to His disciples, to the world. ... That is why the disciples could return home from Bethany rejoicing. In faith we know that Jesus holds His hands stretched out in blessing over us. That is the lasting motive of Christian joy.”

Jesus is continuously blessing us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens (cf. Eph 1:3).

The great manifestation of that blessing is the descent of the Holy Spirit, for whose renewed coming we pray during the days between the Ascension and Pentecost. Saint Luke recalls Jesus’ words: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). That is the power, the blessing, that came down upon the Church on Pentecost.

That is a message and a mission that many no longer readily receive.

Whether they think erroneously that science has disproven faith, or the problem of evil has refuted the possibility of a good God, or scandals have invalidated the Church’s witness, it is clear that proclaiming the Gospel effectively to every creature is challenging work.

But so was trying to convince down-to-earth first-century people that a crucified carpenter had not only risen from the dead but also was the Savior of the world. The same blessing of the Holy Spirit that made the Apostles’ witness fruitful can do the same for ours.

One of the most effective ways to do so is through charity.

Back in 1985, the future Pope Benedict XVI gave a radio address in which he focused on the “delightfully naive pictures” of the Ascension in which the disciples are looking upward as Jesus is passing through the clouds and all we see are Jesus’ feet.

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger commented that we need to recognize His feet and reverence them – in disguise – in others as we follow Christ’s example of washing the Apostles’ feet in the upper room.

“It is only in the humility that knows how to bow down that can raise a person up.”

In order to ascend, we need first to descend humbly in acts of corporal and spiritual works of mercy, including passing on the faith to those who don't know it or who reject what they mistakenly believe it to be.

In this feast of the Ascension, we see Jesus' hands extended in blessing for us as His missionaries and for the world. In Jesus' feet we see an invitation to wash the feet of others as He did in humility and service for His Apostles at the Last Supper.

Christ's Ascension is meant to lead us on an exodus from the self toward God and others, a journey from fear to trust, a passover from the flat earth of a world without God to the multi-dimensional reality of Christ's kingdom.

Christ's Ascension is meant to lift up our hearts as it helps us to drop to our knees.

It is meant to help us to grow to full stature in Christ as we respond to His confidence in making us His missionaries, together with the Holy Spirit, to renew the face of the earth.

It is meant to fill us, even now, with lasting joy.

This is **“How Christ's Ascension Takes the Training Wheels Off Our Faith.”**