

17 May 2015

Today's feast of the Ascension is often associated with departure. Christian art often depicts Jesus literally ascending to heaven to take his place in glory at the right hand of God, the Father. There is a sense of sadness, a sense of leaving his disciples behind, of the disciples not being in close contact with the Master as they had been used to. But the Church gives us this feast not for us to be sad and depressed but to remind us precisely of the call to be the Church, of what it means to truly be disciples of Jesus. Yes, he leaves but the Gospel makes clear that Jesus entrusts his disciples with a mission and with the promise at Pentecost next Sunday that he will always be with his Church.

Proclaim the Good News. Has there ever been a time when the Church and the world have been more conscious of the need for good news? 'Good news' is our core business as disciples of Jesus; good news is at the heart of the Gospel message. How deeply disturbing it was over a week ago to hear that a 17 year old youth was charged by police for allegedly being in possession of explosives in his suburban home and with possible intentions to use them for a very sinister purpose. Whatever moves young people to be radicalised and to seek to visit such violence on our community really is a mystery. And it is far from good news. It always leaves our community feeling vulnerable and under threat. Good News sadly is needed once again for the people of Nepal, who suffered during the week another earthquake. How cruel for a country just starting to get back on its feet again.

As we come to the end of this Easter season, we are also coming to the end of the cycle of readings from the Acts of the Apostles which has been our first reading every Sunday. What strikes me about these readings from the Acts of the Apostles is the confidence and freedom with which they proclaimed the Good News. There is a great joy in the hearts of these early disciples and a great desire to bring Good News to everyone they meet. These readings are filled with a great sense of energy, vision and purpose. No wonder the early Church grew so much and so quickly. Onlookers would say, 'I want to be like them. I want to belong. I want to believe'.

We can understand their sense of confidence with next Sunday being the feast of Pentecost. The gift of the Spirit gave the early Church great energy and confidence in proclaiming the Good News. In fact, it was also a time in the early Church of great suffering and persecution and yet we admire their sense of witness even to the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. They had in abundance what St Paul talks about in today's second reading; 'the spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him'. They truly believed in the fullness of God that filled all creation; hence why their sense of discipleship grew with confidence even after Jesus had ascended to heaven.

The disciples are entrusted with a mission. The gift of Baptism entrusts us with a mission. As the children of Holy Rosary and St Brendan's prepare for their First Eucharist, they too are entrusted with a mission, to pray, to love, to witness and to serve. We all do so by being conscious of our sense of belonging to this parish community, at the table of the Lord we are all brothers and sisters, at the table of the Lord the stranger is welcomed, at the table of the Lord we always remember the poor and needy, in particular the people of Nepal at this time. Here at the table of life we meet the God who never ceases to call us out of darkness and into his own wonderful light.