

Homily of the Mass of May 2018 Anniversary Pilgrimage



Homilias e Mensagens

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Homily of the Mass of May 2018
Anniversary Pilgrimage, by Cardinal
John Tong.

Prayer Area
May 13, 2018

† Cardinal John Tong

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

We have just listened to the account of the Ascension of Jesus according to the Gospel of Mark. St. Luke has left us two accounts of the Ascension, which present the same event in a different light. In his Gospel, the report constitutes almost a song of glory: the glorious ending of the public life of Jesus. In the Acts, the Ascension is considered as the starting point of the missionary expansion of the Church, of His Mystical Body. This is also the perspective of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew. The teaching of today's Word of God invites to go beyond the event of the Ascension, described in terms of space and time: it points to the conclusion of one period of salvation history and the beginning of another.

That Jesus, with whom the disciples have taken food and drink together, ascends to heaven, but continues His invisible permanence within the Church: He remains with us, no more visible in His physical Body, but visible in His Mystical Body, that is, in us, in the Church. She is called to continue the mission and the preaching of Christ, receives the commission to announce God's Kingdom and to give witness to the Lord. For this, the Angels, after the Ascension of the Risen Lord, invite the Apostles not to tarry in looking up at the sky: the event they have witnessed, does not concern only them. On the contrary, from it, the universal dynamic movement starts, which is 'salvific' and 'missionary', under the power of the Holy Spirit. The first reading says: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth."

By the power of this Spirit, Christ is glorified and constituted Universal Lord, head of His Body, the

Church and of the whole of humanity, as today second reading specifies. He attracts to Himself all His members, in order that they reach with Him and in Him life with the Father.

Jesus with His Spirit shapes in us a new humanity. Even more, He himself pushes us in the search for freedom, dignity, justice, responsibility, that is, our will to build up a world more united and just. Therefore, our community of believers, full of missionary zeal and paschal joy, becomes in the world the witness of such a new reality of life achieved in Christ. Such a new reality is shown in the small gestures we do in our daily lives, in the earthly reality and in the daily commitments, that we carry out with the new Spirit of the Lord. Especially, when we engage ourselves in the spiritual liberation and in the human promotion of other people.

The Virgin Mary has given us the first example, when, soon after the Annunciation, She hurried to go to serve her cousin Elisabeth, who was pregnant, and when at Cana, she first realized the difficulty of the newly-wedded spouses for the shortage of wine and solicited Jesus to intervene.

Personally I remember the impact produced in me by the example of charitable services of foreign missionaries, when in my childhood, I was living in Guangzhou just after the end of the 2nd World War. Their missionary and charitable spirit raised in me the desire to imitate them, that is my priestly vocation and made me decide to join the seminary in Macau, shortly before my family took refuge in Hong Kong.

St. Augustine warns us: Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascends to heaven. With Him also our hearts should ascend. Let us listen also to St Paul who proclaims: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth."

The Second Vatican Council teaches us: "Therefore, while we are warned that it profits a man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses himself, the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age. Hence, while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God." (Gaudium et Spes 39)

With our way of living and our example, we must make Christ visible, today, in our society. As the Virgin Mary, we have to welcome His Spirit and let Him work in us: He will help us to bring Christ to

the world and the world to Christ. He will make us open and concerned with the needs of others and to share the treasure and the joy of our faith. The World Communication Day, we are celebrating today, also invites us to share our faith with each person we meet in all circumstances of our journey in life.

We must start it from this Eucharist. Our liturgical assembly is already a lively witness of the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, gathering us for the Eucharist, it already witnesses and proclaims our Lord Jesus: He is present with His Word and Communion, fulfilling the promise: "I will be with you every day till the end of the world." From the presence of the Lord springs up our responsibility and our evangelization mission. The liturgy of the Word announces the mandate of Jesus: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation." The proclaimed Word raises our response of faith in the mystery of Christ through the 'Credo'. His presence in us is the pledge that we will take part with Him and in Him in union with the Father; even more, the sacramental reality already makes us have a foretaste of it today. A liturgical assembly, that celebrates with sincere involvement, these dimensions of the mystery, becomes a living witness of the action of Christ in His Church and of a new humanity, He has started with His Ascension to the Father.

Together with Mary, let us celebrate this Eucharist with commitment and devotion, in order to unite with Christ and receive His Spirit as well as His grace to witness to Him when, once back to our home and daily life, we try with all our effort to share the faith and the love our Lord has left in our hearts, when He ascended to the Father.