My brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today is a great day in the life of our Church. Today we celebrate the last of Jesus’ earthly mysteries. Today we celebrate a great truth of our creed, that “he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.”

The Ascension means that Jesus has gone before us — to open up the gates of heaven for us! So that we can conquer sin and death! The Ascension means that we can live now every day with the hope of heaven. Knowing that where Jesus has gone, we can follow — into the highest heavens!

This is the beautiful truth we celebrate today.

His Ascension is also the start of our mission, the mission that Jesus gave to his Church! So it’s beautiful also this morning that we are going to celebrate the Sacrament of Confirmation with you, my brothers and sisters. Because Confirmation is the sacrament of Christian mission. Confirmation makes us apostles.

As God the Father sent him, Jesus sends each of us out in to the world. To continue his mission. To redeem that little part of the world that we live in — our homes, the places where we work, our neighborhoods. To sanctify reality. To help our loved ones and the people we meet every day get to heaven.

So let’s reflect on our readings for this great solemnity, and ask ourselves what God is saying to us through his holy Word this morning.

Our first reading today tells us that these forty days after Easter were a time of preparation. Jesus was getting his Catholic Church ready for her mission — to go out into the whole world and proclaim the Kingdom of God.

We know the apostles were scared and they must’ve felt ashamed because they had all abandoned him on the night he was betrayed.
So Jesus needed to reassure them. He needed to teach them why it all had to happen. We know that he interpreted the Scriptures for them so they could understand why it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and die.\textsuperscript{ii} We know also that he needed to prove to them that he was really alive!

So that’s what he was doing for these past forty days. Then, on the day of the Ascension, he led them all out to the Mount of Olives.\textsuperscript{iii}

But the Ascension does not mean a farewell. This is the mystery of the Church! With his Ascension, the earthly mission of Jesus ends. That’s true. But the mission of his Spirit and his Church begins.

His Ascension is our mission. That’s what St. Paul is talking about in our second reading today. Jesus gives every one of us his gifts of grace. For only one reason: so we can continue his mission in his Church.

So Jesus goes away, but he is always coming to us. He is always with us.\textsuperscript{iv} Even though we can’t see him anymore. This is the beautiful truth of our religion.

Jesus is alive — in our hearts through Baptism and through the graces we receive in every Eucharist. He is present in every event in our lives. We can turn to him for guidance. He is always there to give us the strength we need to follow him and to do his will.

My brothers and sisters, in our readings today we hear Jesus’ last earthly words. They are very important. Because he’s talking to each one of us.

Jesus tells us: “You will be my witnesses!” Witnesses to what? Witnesses to him. To his Resurrection.

That’s what our Baptism means. That’s what this Confirmation we celebrate today is all about. My brothers and sisters: today, as Jesus promised, his Holy Spirit is going to come upon you with power. To strengthen you for your mission in his Church. To be his apostles. To be his witnesses.

We all have to live the Ascension! We all have to live like those first apostles did. By following Jesus’ teachings and example. By living his life of joy and love and peace! By always looking for ways to share our faith in the Resurrection with others!

Jesus wants to lift everything up to God! He wants to draw all people to heaven. And he wants to do these things —through his Church, through the witness of our lives.\textsuperscript{v}

So may our Blessed Mother Mary, who is Our Lady of the Angels and the Queen of Heaven, help us to always live like those apostles at the Ascension. With our eyes and our hearts always lifted up to heaven.


iii Acts 1:12.


v John 12:32.