

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

The Ascension of the Lord | For Sunday, May 16, 2021

## The Good News of Transformation

*Written by Fr. Mark Suslenko*

**Acts 1:1-11**

**Eph 1:17-23 or Eph 4:1-13**

**or 4:1-7, 11-13**

**Mk 16:15-20**



A woman in her mid-eighties recently remarked about her feelings of heightened anxiety when she ponders how much time she may have left on this earth. In her mind her earthly time clock is rapidly winding down and the end seems very near. Is this a worry due to a lack of hope, a sadness and angst because enough has not been accomplished, or a normal response to the inevitable change that is soon to come? We often see ourselves solely in human terms with life being lived only within the parameters of our birth and our physical death. Decisions we make, priorities we establish, how purposeful and relevant faith is to us and our sense of accomplishment and well-being play out within this limited realm of time and space.

When God became one with us in Jesus Christ, a clear message was sent to the world and to humans in particular. God, who is revealed so perfectly in Jesus Christ, showed us that we have value and are made in God's image and likeness. Mortal human beings radiate with the presence of God and are worthy enough to reveal the intimacy of the Divine Mystery. The human story can now be understood as a partnership, a true and new covenant, celebrating a love relationship between all of creation and their Creator. It is a story that does not solely play out within the confines of this world, nor is it a story that ends with the Cross or even the Resurrection. The human story finds its happy ending in the Ascension. Our human narrative is still evolving and moving ever more closely toward that day when all will be one in Christ and we will be transfigured.

Today reminds us that Jesus now sits at the right hand of the Father as the Christ of God. In this ascended state, we are able to see what we are all meant to become. We have before us this transformed life to anticipate. The disciples got a glimpse of what this transfiguration would be when they ascended the holy mountain. This inheritance that awaits us is an essential part of the

Good News we are called to proclaim! Christ, now ascended to the Father, sets our paths straight and gives us a look at what awaits us. But we often journey through our lives as though we are walking through a barely lit windowless room. We think about ourselves only in terms of what we know and have a difficulty seeing and believing what we can be and can't yet understand. After all, faith has much less to do with what we can see than with what cannot be seen.

The day-to-day challenges of life find us struggling with our incompleteness. This is especially true when we begin to ponder our happiness, accomplishments, goals, desires, and feelings about how well we have done with life. Our unenlightened and dimly lit eyes fail to see the beauty of what is yet to be. We are most certainly, with the passing of each year, not winding down to life. In every real and splendid way, we are very much winding up to life and the surprises that are yet to come on our journey. Imagine how differently we would feel and how creative we would become if we gave more attention to who we are becoming! Focusing on what we stand to gain and not on what we will one day lose is a game changer for sure. Time is no longer the enemy of limitations but the eternal blessing of endless possibilities.

This is why our participation in the mission of the church is so essential. First, we are asked to go and proclaim that Jesus is the Christ. This includes, along with all of the other Gospel precepts, the truth about who God is and who God made us to be. Second, it involves continuing Christ's work of teaching and healing so that all of God's children can jubilantly prepare for the eternal transformation to come! The message of the Gospel is not limited to the matters of this world only. It is directed toward helping human beings understand who they are and healing them from all those things that can make them a lesser version of that.

It is no wonder then, why the poor hold such an honored place in Jesus' ministry. They speak of God's love and they cry out for the compassion that is due them as children of God. Justice is about putting all of our relationships in proper order because we are all filled with the beauty of God's love and have dignity. Of primary importance is our relationship with this world and fighting the tendency to see it only as an end to something that began years ago. The human story, when understood through the Ascended presence of Christ, is truly a love story. It is a Divine romance that is always creative and new, exciting and uplifting, healing and restoring. We are held in a perpetual bond of tenderness and mercy.

What does it matter, then, how old we are or how much time we have left in this world? Today's celebration gives us the strength to persevere, knowing that whether we are as we know ourselves today or who we will be in eternity, all is well. May our hearts be enlightened and the rooms of our lives brightened so that we can know this hope and the surpassing greatness of Christ's power! Go now in peace and tell others about this Good News!

Fr. Mark Suslenko

## PRAYER

Look on us, Lord,  
and let all the darkness of our souls  
disappear before the beams of your brightness.  
Fill us with your holy love  
and open to us the treasures of your wisdom.  
We seek your face.  
Turn your face to us and show us your glory.  
Then our longing will be satisfied  
and our peace will be complete.

*(St. Augustine of Hippo)*

Giver of Life,  
help us to see  
your love and presence  
at work in us.  
Keep us from clinging  
to the cares of this world  
that we may know  
the glorious life  
that awaits us tomorrow.  
Amen.