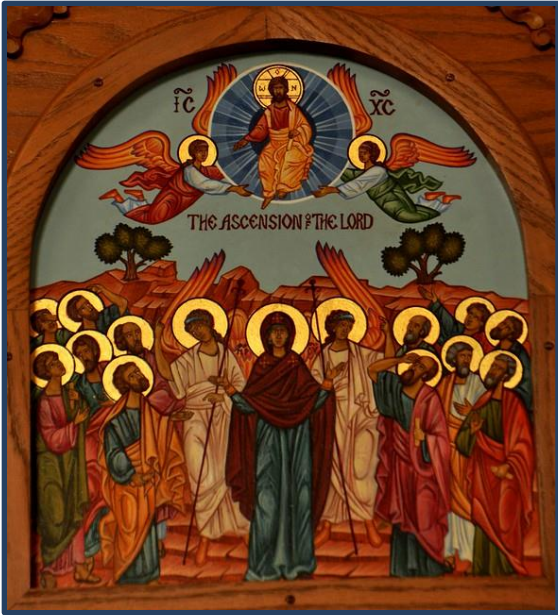


The Apostles were eyewitnesses of the Ascension of our Lord. They saw Jesus being lifted by a cloud and taken up into the heavens. They were left in a state of confusion; they were afraid to face the world and their future without Jesus. They thought they had lost Him when He died, but He returned to them after He rose from the dead—why must He leave them again? It seems the Apostles were paralyzed, they just stood there staring into the skies. Two angels were sent to awaken them, “Why do you stand here looking up at the skies? This Jesus who has been taken from you will return, just as you saw him go up into the heavens” (Acts 1:11).



We have all had our moments of paralysis—when it seemed God had ascended out of reach and left us alone with our problems. Like the Apostles, we need angels to come and remind us: “Wake up! God knows what He’s doing; He has not forgotten you. Get on with your life, He has a plan!” In fact, Jesus did not leave His Apostles alone; He left them with a promise: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, yes, even to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). This promise is given to each of us whenever we feel abandoned by Jesus—if only we persevere in faith during our time of trial, we will receive power from on high, the power of the Holy Spirit. When the Apostles were seemingly left alone, they held to Jesus’ promise; they gathered together and persevered in prayer for nine days, then the heavens broke loose and they were transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost Sunday.

The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord is a feast of joyful hope! In reference to this Solemnity, St. Leo the Great said, “In the person of Christ, WE have penetrated the heights of heaven.” What does this mean? In the Second Reading for the Mass of the Ascension, we find a beautiful prayer which explains the significance of the mystery of the Ascension:

“MAY THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF GLORY, GIVE YOU A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND INSIGHT TO KNOW HIM CLEARLY. **MAY THE EYES OF (YOUR) HEARTS BE ENLIGHTENED, THAT YOU MAY KNOW WHAT IS THE HOPE TO WHICH HE HAS CALLED YOU, WHAT ARE THE RICHES OF GLORY IN HIS INHERITANCE AMONG THE HOLY ONES, AND WHAT IS THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF HIS POWER IN US WHO BELIEVE, IN ACCORD WITH THE EXERCISE OF HIS GREAT MIGHT, WHICH HE WORKED IN CHRIST, RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD AND SEATING HIM AT HIS RIGHT HAND IN THE HEAVENS ...**”

Eph 1:17-23

So, the next time you are “paralyzed”—gazing hopelessly into the heavens—may the angels remind you of the profound implications of Jesus’ Ascension: WE have penetrated the heights of heaven in Christ! His power is surpassingly great in us who believe, and we have every reason to wait in joyful hope for the future! In faith, we can lift up our hands and pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit—the spirit of love, joy, peace, gentleness, patience, courage, purity—and be renewed as witnesses of Christ to the world! This is the wonderful, hope-filled, message of the Ascension of our Lord!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples