

Homily Ascension (28.5.17)

'Our most noble calling',

to be witnesses & apostles of Christ today

Visiting priest – Canon Thomas O'Connor

As you know, today we are celebrating the feast of Our Blessed Lord's ascension into heaven. At Easter we remembered Christ's glorious resurrection from the dead. We rejoiced then because through rising from the dead, Christ completed our redemption, and foreshadowed our own resurrection on the last day. After His resurrection Jesus spent forty days here on earth. During that time He appeared to many different groups of people. He appeared most frequently to the apostles. He wanted to reassure them, and to restore their faith, which had been so shaken by the events of Good Friday. When their faith was sufficiently restored, Our Lord took the apostles to the Mount of Olives. There He repeated His promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide and direct them. Then He ascended before their eyes, into heaven.

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus renewed the commission He had already given the apostles. They were to go out and teach all nations –

'Go therefore,' He said,

'and teach all nations. Baptise them, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.'

The Apostles took Our Lord's words very seriously. Immediately after Pentecost, they set out to bring the Good News of Salvation, to people all around. They met with remarkable success. Tradition has it that St Mark even took the Gospel to the peoples of Southern India. From our Church history we know that by the end of the first century A.D. Christianity was already a potent force throughout the whole Roman Empire. The Gospel of Christ has had to be preached anew in every generation. Down through the centuries, new apostles have arisen to preach the Good News of salvation to the people of their own time and place. Apostles are required today just as urgently – perhaps more

urgently now than at any other time in history. The Gospel of Christ has to be preached, and lived in our own day. It is part of our Christian calling that WE should be those who bring the Good News of Christ to the people of our own day.

At our Baptism we became followers of Christ. At our Confirmation we received the mandate to go out and claim the world, once again for Christ. So let us do all we can to fulfil this mandate – to be REAL apostles – to try our best to make Christ known through our words, and most importantly, through our own good example.

If we LIVE our faith, it will have an effect upon other people. It will help them to get to know Christ, and become His followers. This is OUR MOST NOBLE CALLING – to be the apostles and witnesses of Christ in the world of today.