



Archbishop of Montreal

Homilie
Sunday, May 24, 2020

Solemnity of the Ascension – Year A (bilingual homily) Mt 28, 16-20

Let us take the time to contemplate Jesus Christ in heaven.

During this pandemic through which we went together, while deconfinement now begins at different paces in different regions, we lived through special moments when our feelings went through various stages. It may have been moments of concern, of reflection, of work, and even of discouragement.

Have you had moments when you just stopped to think and contemplate? Moments when you contemplated beauty and that which is beautiful—perhaps a loved one, or a family album? Or, while on a walk (mindful of physical distancing of course), have you pondered the beauty of the sky, of the landscape, of nature's natural beauty? Did you take the time for contemplation?

Contemplating is also breathing! It is exhaling in the right way, while also being attentive to inhaling! Contemplation is a time for inspiration, through which we open ourselves to beauty. Beauty is very much present in the world, and we can contemplate beauty in the world.

On this Ascension Sunday, I invite you to take the time to contemplate the beauty of Jesus Christ. The beauty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, truly God, truly man, crucified and resurrected.

After Easter, after the resurrection, Jesus Christ appeared to his disciples over 40 days until he finally ascended into heaven. There is a special beauty in the mystery of the Ascension.

The Son of God is eternal! He lives in all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit. But since he became incarnate in the world, he fully assumed our human nature, but not only for a limited time! He spent a limited time with us in his life on earth, the time to speak to us, to speak to us of the eternal life, the time to love us and to give his life for us, before returning to heaven to be with the Father.

Then, he returned to the Father, but taking with him our humanity that he had assumed while he was on earth, he took it with him to heaven! He took it with him to heaven, because he was not only resurrected, but he is alive in his body and his soul, alive as a divine person who has forever assumed our humanity and who exists body and soul for all eternity. Jesus is alive with a human heart, with a human body, but his body is also glorified, transfigured, and resurrected.

By his ascension into heaven, Jesus carries our humanity into heaven. In a mysterious way, our humanity, our human nature, finds itself within the life of God himself, within the eternal life of the Trinity.

From the incarnation of Christ to the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection until his ascension into heaven, all that Jesus Christ did, he did through his humanity, which is also our humanity that he had fully assumed! Before the incarnation, all that Jesus did he did as a divine

person. After the Ascension, he acts as a divine person who has assumed our humanity. For this reason, our humanity is now at the heart of the life of God.

In this sense, to contemplate Jesus Christ is to contemplate just how far his love goes. It is to contemplate his love that wants to be so close to us that he has taken on our human nature. Maybe one could now say: "Yes, he took on our human nature, but after the Ascension, he is now far from us in heaven!"

But to the contrary, be assured that he is closer to us now than had he not ascended into heaven! Had there been no ascension, we would think that in order to see Jesus Christ, we would have to go somewhere on Earth. Maybe we needed to go to Jerusalem or somewhere else! We would have to go to a specific place to meet him.

But in disappearing before our eyes on the day of the Ascension, he tells us that we can meet him wherever we are. There is nowhere you cannot meet him. We can be in the deepest valley, literally or metaphorically. We can be in despair, experiencing darkness, the unknown, be in anguish. Yet, Jesus Christ is close to us, always by our side.

By his ascension, he makes himself close to every human being. No, God is not far away. We can distance ourselves from God for all kinds of reasons, but he never leaves us. We can walk away from the love of Jesus Christ, but he never walks away, and he never ceases to love us. Jesus is always by our side, always present.

To contemplate Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Ascension is to contemplate his presence in our heart and in our life. It is to contemplate Jesus Christ who knocks at the door of our heart to dwell in our soul, our spirit, our flesh.

At the same time, to contemplate Jesus Christ in the mystery of the Ascension is to contemplate this light that is always given to us. We may be in a dark valley, and with no light whatsoever, but in the distance, we see a light beckoning on the horizon, high above the mountains, showing us in which direction to walk.

In this pandemic filled with uncertainty and worries, we can turn our attention to Jesus Christ who is before us like a light that guides us without ceasing, a light that attracts us towards the path on which we are called to walk.

During this pandemic, we can walk towards Jesus Christ who is our light. We can open our heart to his presence and rediscover how much Jesus Christ is present in our life. We can rediscover our attachment to him, rediscover his presence.

The rediscovery, it is to renew our desire to walk with him, it is to rediscover our desire to be his disciple and walk by his side.

To contemplate Jesus Christ is to take the time for contemplation, it is to open our heart to the beauty of the love of God, to the greatness of the love of God, to the richness of the love of God.

God is our creator. Without him, nothing would exist except God who is eternal. Jesus Christ is also our Saviour. Risen and ascended into heaven, he comes to us no matter what our situation, no matter how far away we are, however great our suffering. He comes to us, to let us know of eternal life, to let us know of his life, his peace, his strength, his light.

Let us take the time to contemplate Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father.

The last words of someone who's leaving us are always important. What are the last words of Jesus Christ before the Ascension? He talks about the mission. But what a mission! To witness to Jesus Christ throughout the world, everywhere, through time and space. And not only to talk about the love of God, but also to talk about God's commandments! All of God's

commandments! To talk about everything! Everything that He's taught us. To teach everything that he's taught us. How can you do that? By ourselves, it's humanly impossible! It's a divine mission! How can human beings fulfill a divine mission?

That's why that the first thing that he will say is wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit! Wait for the Holy Spirit! Without the Holy Spirit, the mission is impossible. Wait for the Holy Spirit! So, praying, to be gathered in prayer, praying personally and with others to be in prayer, to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, this is a priority for the mission. No Holy Spirit, no mission is possible. We need the Holy Spirit to be in the mission. So, the two go hand in hand. Waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit, praying with Mary for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and listening to the call for the Mission. To hold the two together. But even there, it's not an easy path! That's why he adds to it by saying: "I'll be with you 'til the end of time!" I will be with you, not once a year! No! Every day! Every day 'til the end of time!

So, today in this pandemic, Jesus Christ is with us. He's with us so that we'll live through him. But he's with us also giving us the Holy Spirit to be in a mission today. The mission never stops. The mission is here, right now, in this pandemic. How to fulfill the mission? Well, we need to pray so that the Holy Spirit will guide us and the fulfillment of the mission that God entrust us today, in this situation, in this world.

As we are preparing for the Pentecost, we're called to pray every day to prepare ourselves to the Pentecost. Praying to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. If the mission is important for us, we believe in the mission, we want to promote, made known the love of Jesus Christ, we want to make known the Mercy of God, but we need to pray the Holy Spirit.

So, let us pray to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. And let us ask the Holy Spirit, to put in our heart a burning desire to witness the love of God, to witness to Jesus Christ today.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Christian Lépine". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

† Christian Lépine
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