

Mt 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23 Ascension 2023

Something beautiful happened. I was called to anoint a man, on hospice, who was sent home to die. But he was so afraid, because he wanted to go where his Catholic wife went...into heaven.

So I asked him: Do you want to become Catholic? He said yes. I said out loud: What is to prevent me from baptizing you right now? He said: Nothing. So, I heard his confession.

Then, I found the baptismal rite; I asked him the basic questions: do you reject Satan, do you believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Catholic Church? He said "yes" and I could tell he really meant it.

Tears of joy came pouring down his face as I baptized him in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And I gave him his first communion.

Do you know what is so amazing? The incredible influence a spouse can have-- when they share their faith and love with the other.

And, that is what God is calling us to do: to witness and teach others about Jesus Christ...simply by sharing our faith and love with them.

In the first reading, before their very eyes, Jesus ascended into heaven. Like the second reading says: God the Father: *Raise[ed] him from the dead and seat[ed] him at his right hand in the heavens* (Eph 1:20).

But Jesus also promised that He would prepare a place for us. That means He will pray for us. And: *I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be* (Jn 14:3).

Jesus often compared heaven to an eight-day sumptuous wedding banquet: everyone is happy and healthy, great food, wine, and music...and not a care in the world.

Like St. Paul said: *Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard...what God has ready for those who love him* (1 Cor 2:9).

After Jesus ascended, the apostles just stood there, staring up at the sky. So a couple angels had to remind them to get to work.

They weren't going to find Jesus staring up at the sky. They were going to find Jesus by witnessing and teaching others about Jesus.

That is why Jesus commissioned them to: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19).

In the first reading, Jesus commissioned them to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). And, in the gospel reading, Jesus commissioned them to be His teachers to the world (Mt 28:20).

Why is that important? Because when we were baptized, we were anointed priest, prophet and king, and commissioned by Jesus to do the very same thing.

Jesus loves us and trusts us so much that He commissioned us to make His mission, our mission. How? By becoming witnesses and teachers in our homes, in our work, in our schools and wherever we happen to be.

Does that mean we should become religious fanatics and preach to our families, friends and anyone around us? No.

We just have to make an effort to become the kind of person God the Father made us to be...the kind of person Jesus teaches us to be...and the kind of person the Holy Spirit inspires us to be.

We witness and teach others by our love when they need us, by our patience when they annoy us, by our forgiveness when they hurt us, and by our perseverance when we feel like quitting.

As parents, you should witness and teach your children about Jesus by baptizing them, by preparing them for the sacraments, by bringing them to mass and by sharing with them your faith.

Pray together, because that is one of the most beautiful things a family can do. And, pray by yourself, not just memorized prayers, but have a conversation with God, every day.

Jesus said: we must teach those baptized to *observe all that I have commanded you* (Mt 28:20). That means complete obedience to the will of God.

Jesus commanded us to: *Love one another as I love you* (Jn 15:12). That means we have to teach them how to love.

Can we do that? The apostles had doubts. The gospel says: *When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted* (Mt 28:17). They knew their weaknesses and they were afraid to accept the call.

But it doesn't matter. Jesus ignored their doubts. And Jesus ignores our doubts. Do you know why? Like Jesus said: *All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me* (Mt 28:18). *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19).

That means Jesus gave us the power!

We have the power: The power that turned water into wine at Cana. The power that calmed the storms at sea. The power that gave sight to blind Bartimaeus.

The power that multiplied the loaves and fish to feed the multitudes. The power to that drove out a legion of demons into a herd of swine. The power that rose Lazarus from the dead and resurrected Jesus Christ into heaven.

All that power that was in Jesus Christ, is now inside of us.

Like He said: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you* (Acts 1:8). And, *Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do [even] greater ones than these* (Jn 14:12).

Why? *So that the Father may be glorified in the Son* (Jn 14:13); and that the Son may be glorified in us (Jn 17:10).

And, like Jesus promised: *behold, I am with you always, until the end of [time]* (Mt 28:20).

Let us pray: Lord Jesus Christ, never leave us, and give us the power of Your grace and the Holy Spirit to be Your witnesses to the world and Your teachers to the nations.

Help us to share our love and faith by becoming the kind of person you made us to be, the kind of person you teach us to be and the kind of person you inspire us to be:

May we be: Our Lord Jesus Christ for everyone else!