

Feast of Ascension A/2005

The feast of the Ascension is the feast of the glorification of our Lord, which has already started with his resurrection from the dead. The mystery we celebrate in the feast of the Ascension is the same mystery that we celebrate in the resurrection, because if God has raised Christ from the dead, it was so that he would sit at his right hand and becomes the Lord of the living and the dead.

Christ's body was glorified at the moment of Resurrection, as proved by his different apparitions. But during the forty days when he eats and drinks familiarly with his disciples and teaches them about the kingdom, his glory remains veiled under the appearance of ordinary humanity. His final apparition ends with the irreversible entry of his humanity into divine glory, symbolized by the cloud and by heaven, where he is seated from that time forward at God's right hand.

All the readings of this day underline this mystery of the glorification of Jesus. The popular representation of pictures often show the ascension of Jesus as rising slowly from the ground, like a rocket and getting lost in the clouds. And yet the ascension is more than that. In fact, the reason of our joy and of today's feat is that Jesus has not gone far from us, he has not gone to some other place; he is still with us in a different way. Before Easter he could only be in one place at time, he could only speak to the people he was with at that time. Now all these limits have been removed; he is in the glory of his Father, but still close to us forever and everywhere.

This is the message of today's readings. The ascension is not a physical or a material departure of Jesus, but his entrance into the glory of the Father. His life is now completely different from ours: it cannot be seen, touched and verified physically because it belongs to the world of God; it can be only the subject of our faith and the only way we can speak of it is through images.

That Jesus is now in glory at the right hand of the Father does not mean that Christians should lose interest in the things of this world. In this perspective the remark of angels becomes clear: "Why are you standing here looking at the sky"? The looking up to sky is the attitude of passivity that has characterized some Christians after Jesus' death. Instead of looking down to earth and committing themselves very seriously to transforming this world, many kept looking up at the sky, vainly waiting for the imminent return of Jesus. In other words, the disciples were just like some present-day Christians who do not take religion as a stimulus to work seriously at bettering the lives of their fellow people. God now tell them: "Stop looking up to heaven", you must give a proof of the authenticity of your faith right here on earth.

In this context you understand the importance of the mission Jesus gives to his disciples. They should evangelize the whole world; they have to bring the good news to all human kind. This mission is today given to all the Christians and it up to them now to make grow the church by announcing the kingdom of God.

What I am saying here does not mean that, contemplation, meditation and adoration, become vain, it means only that we have to find a balance between contemplation and action, prayer and work. In other words, while the Christians are committed to the transformation of this world, they should not forget that this world is passing. This is the point of the second reading of St. Paul to the Ephesians. The Christians must never forget how their lives are not completely enclosed within the boundaries of this world. Though committed to the various task of this life, they are to feel like foreigners awaiting the return of Christ, who comes to take them away.

In this mission the grace of God is accompanying us whatsoever situation we may go through, until the end of the world. In this feast of Ascension that is also a mother's day, let us ask God to bless all the mothers in the United States throughout the world. Let us ask God to bless the mission he has given to each of us. May he bless the effort of the evangelization done by many missionaries throughout the world!



Homily Date: May 08, 2005
© 2005 – Father Felicien Ilunga Mbala
Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20050508homily.pdf