

**Are you saved?**

**A common question we have all heard**

**And one that is often directed against Catholics**

**How do we take this question when we hear it?**

**I think mostly we think: saved from hell, right?**

**But today's feast offers another viewpoint**

**What are we saved for?**

**And when we realize that**

**It opens a brand new outlook**

**Rather than running from something**

**We run to someone**

**You are saved for heaven**

**You are saved for eternity**

**You are saved for God**

**We begin our readings this week by going back**

**Ever since Easter, we have been reading from the Acts of the Apostles**

**Today, we go to the beginning of this book**

**A continuation of the Gospel of Luke**

**The Book of Acts speak of the mystery of God's presence in our lives**

**It is a mystery of how Christ reigns in the world**

**While sitting at the right hand of the Father**

**How he is building his kingdom through his disciples**

**Beginning with the Apostles**

**And continuing today**

**When Christ Ascends into heaven, he goes away**

**And at the same time, he remains**

**When he walked with his disciples**

**He told them of the one who would come**

**He tells them to wait for him before they begin their mission**

**They don't grasp what their mission is**

***Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?***

**They are speaking of the kingdom of David**

**But Christ's kingdom is not an ethnic kingdom**

**His kingdom is not confined to a national border**

**His kingdom will extend to the ends of the earth**

**When he tells them this**

**While they are looking on**

**He is engulfed in a cloud**

**Taken from their sight**

**Suddenly two men are with them**

***Men of Galilee***

***Why are you standing here looking at the sky?***

***This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven***

***Will return the same way***

**The cloud calls to mind the transfiguration**

**The glory of God**

**It also calls to mind the Old Testament**

**When the cloud fills the Holy of Hollies**

**And the cloud that led the Israelite nation for forty ears**

**And brought them into the Promised Land**

**His departure is not a journey to the stars**

**It is not a cosmic journey**

**It is a journey to another dimension of being**

**An entry into the mystery of God**

**Into a communion of power and life with God**

**This is how he can be gone from us**

**And yet remain with us at the same time**

**His promise to send the Holy Spirit is renewed in every generation**

**In our letter to the Ephesians**

**St Paul tries to explain this mystery**

**He teaches The Ascension is more than a line in our creed**

**It has implications for our lives on earth**

**Jesus is seated on his throne**

**And ruling through his church, which is his body**

***The hope that belongs to God's call***

***The riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones***

***And the surpassing greatness of his power***

**These belong to us**

**His body, the Church, because of the Ascension**

**The Apostles were the first to experience this**

**He gives them their mission**

**He gives us our mission**

**Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature**

**To preach baptism and salvation**

**Quite a mission to an unkempt bunch like the apostles**

**They were not educated in the worldly sense**

**Laborers, fishermen, a tax collector and a political zealot**

**They were not worldly travelers**

**And yet they were chosen for this mission**

**As we are chosen for our mission**

**To take our place in the mission of the Church**

**The Ascension brings an end to this phase of Jesus' life on earth**

**But it opens up the way for the next phase of his life on earth**

**The disciples had been his companions**

**They would now be his co-workers  
He would reign through them  
Through us down to our own day  
The disciples had walked with Christ  
They had witnessed his passion and death  
Then he was raised  
He walked with them  
He ate with them  
They probably thought this was the way it was going to be  
And now he goes away  
But it is not like we might think  
We tend to think there is a spiritual realm and a physical realm  
A two tiered understanding  
Separate one from the other  
This is our rational thought process  
How things are depicted in art  
But the Biblical view is one of connection  
They are interwoven with each other  
The visible and the invisible  
All a part of God's creation  
Jesus isn't off on some different planet**

**Winding a clock to keep things going here**

**He remains in a relationship with the Father**

**And with us on earth**

**He sends his spirit to guide us**

**To bring heaven to earth**

**And earth to heaven**

**This is central to the Ascension**

**The Ascension teaches that we are not saved from hell**

**We are saved to be with God in heaven**

**To be with Christ in this life**

**We see the suffering and death of Christ led him back to the Father**

**We can unite our suffering with his**

**And be led to the Father**

**We see through the Ascension our real destiny**

**It is the destiny of humanity**

**We are not made for worldly domination**

**We have what St Thomas called 'partia'**

**We have a homeland**

**And nothing on earth, or even everything on earth, can take its place**

**Our home is in heaven**

**And the Ascension teaches Jesus' presence will not be through seeing**

**But in believing**

**His presence will fill the earth through the sacraments**

**Through the Mass**

**In this way he is in all places simultaneously**

**He is here in this church**

**If we go on vacation**

**He is there in the nearest Catholic Church**

**Even if we turn our backs, He is there**

**Waiting with open arms for our return**

**The Ascension isn't the end of Jesus' story**

**Next week we will hear of another event**

**We will hear the story of Pentecost**

**But for today we recall a new dimension in our relationship with Jesus**

**Knowing that the Son became man**

**So we might become sons and daughters in him**

**We see that we are saved for God**

**To be with him for all eternity**

**Not running from something**

**But running to someone**

**This is how the Ascension becomes more than a history lesson**

**It becomes a destination**