

From the Chapel – May 21: Our true home



[“From the Chapel”](#) is a series of short, daily reflections on life and faith in a time of uncertainty. As people across the world cope with the effects of the coronavirus – including the social isolation necessary to combat its spread – these reflections remind us of the hope that lies at the heart of the Gospel.

Ascension, the meme circulating on Facebook this year notes, is “the day when Jesus started working from home.” For Catholics growing restless after months of COVID-19 restrictions, it’s not exactly LOL funny, but it does have a certain wry humor about it.

I prefer my Ascension Thursdays to have blue skies and white fluffy clouds (which was, alas, not the case in northeast Indiana today). I challenge anyone to read Acts 1:11 – “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” – and picture a windy, gray, overcast day. Ascension Thursday, like Easter Sunday, cries out for green grass, sunshine and a world made anew.

It’s not just that those men in white who made it clear to the disciples that Jesus was well and truly gone also made it clear that he would return “in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.” Rather, it’s what his departure meant. Christ himself had told the disciples that, unless he left them, the Holy Spirit would not come; and they spent the next nine days – the original novena – in the upper room, praying for the Spirit who came to them on Pentecost Sunday.

But it’s more even than that. When Christ died, he conquered death; when he rose again, we, the baptized, rose with him to

new life. But it still wasn't entirely clear how heaven fit into this story.

Had Christ simply vanished from the disciples' sight – one moment they saw him; the next they did not – an important sign would have been lost. As he rose from the earth, though, in his glorified body, reunited with his soul, there was no mistaking what was happening: Man, in his fullness, was entering into the kingdom of heaven. Creation would stand alongside the creator; the material world had been redeemed.

This was not a small matter 2,000 years ago, or even today. The gulf between the creator and the created in the other Abrahamic religions remains so wide that the very idea of the Incarnation is, for them, blasphemy. The Ascension is the culmination of the Incarnation: The creator entered the world, became man, and now the God-made-man has entered heaven – and because he has, we can as well.

Today, Christ started working from home – our true home, as well as his. We long today to leave our homes, to rejoin the wider world. But that wider world will, for each of us and for all of us, one day come to an end – and Christ will be waiting to welcome us to our true home, if only we believe, and act on that belief.

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