

# THE PASTOR'S DESK

May 16, 2010 - Feast of the Ascension



## Dear Parishioners,

Today, I will let St. Augustine speak to us from his famous homily for the Feast of the Ascension:

"Today our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven; let our hearts ascend with him.

Listen to the words of the Apostle: *If you have risen with Christ, set your hearts on the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God; seek the things that are above, not the things that are on earth.* For just as he remained with us even after his ascension, so we too are already in heaven with him, even though what is promised us has not yet been fulfilled in our bodies.

Christ is now exalted above the heavens, but he still suffers on earth all the pain that we, the members of his body, have to bear. He showed this when he cried out from above: *Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?* and when he said: *I was hungry and you gave me food.*

Why do we on earth not strive to find rest with him in heaven even now, through the faith, hope and love that unites us to him? While in heaven he is also with us; and we while on earth are with him. He is here with us by his divinity, his power and his love. We cannot be in heaven, as he is on earth, by divinity, but in him, we can be there by love.

He did not leave heaven when he came down to us; nor did he withdraw from us when he went up again into heaven. The fact that he was in heaven even while he was on earth is borne out by his own statement: *No one has ever ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.*

These words are explained by our oneness with Christ, for he is our head and we are his body. No one ascended into heaven except Christ because we also are Christ: he is the Son of Man by his union with us, and we by our union with him are the sons of God.

So the Apostle says: *Just as the human body, which has many members, is a unity, because all the different members make one body, so is it also with Christ.* He too has many members, but one body.

Out of compassion for us he descended from heaven, and although he ascended alone, we also ascend, because we are in him by grace. Thus, no one but Christ descended and no one but Christ ascended; not because there is no distinction between the head and the body, but because the body as a unity cannot be separated from the head."

St. Augustine looks at this great Feast through the lens of the Incarnation. During Augustine's life (354-430), the "Christological Controversies" were

raging in the Church. The question of the relationship between Christ's divine and human natures was seeking its proper expression. As with all mysteries, the key is finding the language that frames and supports that mystery rather than one that explains it away. The mystery is the union of the divine nature and human nature in the person of Christ. The explanations that failed either diminished the human or the divine nature. An explanation that was rejected in the Council of Ephesus in 431 (the year after Augustine's death) said that there were two persons in Christ, a human person and the person of the Son of God. The Catechism explains it this way in paragraph 466:

"The Nestorian heresy regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's Son. Opposing this heresy, St. Cyril of Alexandria and the third ecumenical council, at Ephesus in 431, confessed "that the Word, uniting to himself in his person the flesh animated by a rational soul, became man. Christ's humanity has no other subject than the divine person of the Son of God, who assumed it and made it his own, from his conception. For this reason the Council of Ephesus proclaimed in 431 that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb: *Mother of God, not that the nature of the Word or his divinity received the beginning of its existence from the holy Virgin, but that, since the holy body, animated by a rational soul, which the Word of God united to himself according to the hypostasis, was born from her, the Word is said to be born according to the flesh.*"

That is why we say that Jesus is a Divine Person. He is only one person (the eternal Son of God) but with two natures. The human nature of Christ communicates His Divine life to us. In this way, Augustine could speak of us being in Heaven with Christ and of Him being on earth in suffering with His people. The Ascension is not a separation of us from Christ but a step in the completion of the sharing of the Divine Life between God and man, a sharing which will reach its fullness in Heaven.

**God bless,  
Fr. LaHood**

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**Results of Parish Council Election:** Congratulations to the newly elected members of the Parish Council: Yolanda Caraballo and Karl Hren. Each will serve a three year term. We thank all previous members of the Council who have served and have given their time and talent to the parish. Thank you also to those who voted.