

ASCENSION - 2020

We celebrate today, not only the Ascension of our Lord, but we are also celebrating what we hope is the beginning of a return to Mass being offered in our church with more of you, the faithful, in attendance.

And so, today is a sign of hope ... hope for the full participation of everyone gathered together again around the banquet table of the Eucharist.

Our Lord's Ascension into heaven is also a sign of hope: the hope of our following where Jesus Christ has gone before us.

And in the meantime ... this period when the Church looks forward to the return of her Lord, we have the hope of constant union with him through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

As we heard in the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus tells the Eleven: "wait for the promise of the Father ... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

On Tuesday this past week, we read from the Gospel according to John where Jesus prepares the disciples for his Ascension by saying:

"It is better for you that I go. For, if I do not go, the Paraclete will never come to you. If I go, I will send the Paraclete to you."

As we know, the Paraclete is the Holy Spirit.

It is the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

It is the Holy Spirit who transforms us into the Body of Christ.

In the Ascension Jesus returns to the Father so that the Father and the Son might be present to us and with us and within us in a new way.

Jesus has been present with us in a new way throughout this current health crisis.

As much as we have missed the celebration of the Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion, Jesus has still been with us. He has not left us orphans.

The Ascension of Jesus removes any possible barrier between us and the indwelling of the Holy Trinity - that is, except the barrier of a heart closed to that indwelling.

Our unity with one another as the Church, the Body of Christ, has endured despite our physical separation. This, too, is one of the fruits of the Ascension.

I am filled with joy that some of you are physically present in the church this weekend. Let us pray that our numbers can gradually increase without any spread of the virus.

But to all of you who are watching this mass and participating in it from home, know that you are very much present with us today as you have been throughout the past 8 weeks.

You have all been in my prayers and in my heart.

"Absence does make the heart grow fonder."

Be assured of my love for each of you, for it is the Spirit of love who unites us as a family of faith ...

... called, not to stand around staring up into the heavens ...

... but rather sent by Jesus as were the first disciples to be his witnesses in the world.