



COMMISSIONED TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS!

Can you remember what it was like when your parents prepared you for starting school as a child? Can you remember their advice or parting words as you went off to high school, maybe college, got married? Did they have any words of wisdom to share, any last minute instructions before leaving you?

In two of today's readings, we hear accounts of Jesus' ascension. Before leaving, Jesus had last minute instructions for the disciples that focused the most important things for them to remember as they took on his mission which became the mission of the church. We see Jesus telling the disciples to be witnesses to "the ends of the earth" of the good news they had seen and experienced. Namely, the good news to be shared was the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, in which they were exposed to love and forgiveness that have the power to bring about repentance.

The author of Acts addresses Theophilus, which means "Beloved of God." The messages of Acts and all Jesus' messages through life were for all of us "beloved of God." We ultimately have received the power of the Spirit in baptism to share what we have seen and heard, what we believe as disciples.

I found it curious that the disciples were not sad when Jesus left. The Gospel tells us that, as Jesus blessed the disciples, he was carried into heaven. The disciples are described as worshiping Jesus and then returning to Jerusalem with great joy. It seems they had profound trust in Jesus' assuring them of the Father's promise of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps they had that confidence that comes with a sense of mission and with a sense of being "clothed with power from on high" as promised. We, too, can count on the Holy Spirit and on being "clothed with power from on high" as we take on witnessing to the good news.

Jesus was clear that "repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be in his name to all the nations." When you think about it, the disciples had witnessed over and over Jesus' forgiveness of others and themselves. They knew Jesus' forgiveness was offered to all. They had witnessed this especially during his last day on the cross. They also heard him preach it: "[L]ove your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you... Forgive and you will be forgiven" (Lk 6:27-28, 37b).

As Christians we are called to share the good news of Jesus in our part of the world. How do you live out this commission in your life? There are lots of possibilities: Perhaps it's the way you love and forgive your children and/or the way you relate to your co-workers or classmates. Maybe it is in a more formal way like teaching in your parish catechetical program, helping with the RCIA sessions, being a sponsor for catechumens or confirmation candidates, sharing in the marriage preparation process, serving as a lector or musician, inviting a neighbor or friend to join the church, participating in or helping facilitate parish retreats, taking part in justice-oriented events, planning and implementing missionary activities. There are a myriad of ways to consciously and personally fulfill your commission to share the good news of Jesus.

The ascension of Jesus happened a long time ago, but the parting words of Jesus are to be taken to heart and carried out today as courageously and enthusiastically as the apostles did in their day. Find your personal way to do this.

Although we heard in today's readings about Jesus' departure through His ascension, we know that Jesus remains with us in the gift of the Eucharist through which He continually nourishes us for the mission of sharing the good news with all the world.

The disciples, witnesses to all the events of Christ's life, were blessed by Him as He parted from them and was taken up to heaven.... Luke 24:46-53

