

**The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord - Year A – 5/17/2026 – Msgr. Peter Quang Nguyen**

**First Reading: Acts 1:1-11** – Luke recounts the events that occurred between Jesus’ resurrection and his ascension. Jesus appeared to his disciples, gave them instructions, and promises, and was taken up into heaven while they watched.

**Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 47** – A psalm of praise and exaltation to God as the king over all the earth. It describes God ascending to his throne amidst shouts of joy and trumpet blasts and calls on all peoples to clap their hands and sing praises to him. The psalm also highlights God’s reign over the nations and his holy throne.

**Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23** – A prayer from Paul for the Ephesian believers, asking God to give them spiritual wisdom and knowledge so that they may understand the hope and inheritance they have in Christ. Paul also emphasizes the power of God that was revealed when Christ was raised from the dead and exalted to the highest place, above all earthly powers and authorities.

**Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20** – The resurrected Jesus appears to his disciples on a mountain in Galilee. Jesus commissions his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything he has commanded.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

**“THE ASCENSION: A NEW MODE OF PRESENCE”**

The event of Jesus’ Ascension marks a presence of a new kind. Whereas, while in His mortal body, Jesus’ presence seemed limited, now—in His Risen Body—He is present everywhere and at all times with His disciples, no longer bound by the constraints of physical space or time. Jesus’ presence with us following His Ascension is symbolized by His dwelling in the high heavens—a vantage point from which He can observe every step and path taken by His witnesses, in order to accompany, guide, console, encourage, and bestow blessings upon them.

Each Gospel recounts the event of Jesus’ Ascension in its own unique way, yet all conclude with a sending-forth—a mandate that sets the disciples on their journey to fulfill their mission. As we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension today, through the concluding narrative of his Gospel, the Evangelist Matthew details the specific commands given by Jesus:

1. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.
2. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
3. Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you.
4. The Promise: I am with you always, until the end of the age.

**1. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.**

Just as Jesus gathered His disciples to live together—both with one another and with Him—regarding one another as friends, sharing meals at the same table, and engaging in mutual understanding and sharing within the fabric of daily life; so too now, Jesus desires that His disciples prioritize accompanying one another—even before the act of preaching. It is essential to first foster a spirit of sharing and solidarity among human beings; only then should one proceed to the proclamation of the Good News. In this dimension, evangelizing someone means helping them delve deeply into the personal experiences they have undergone in the past, until the day they recognize in Christ—specifically in His death and resurrection—the truth that illuminates their life.

**2. Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

When comparing the accounts of baptism found in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 19:5) with those in the Epistles of Saint Paul, we cannot be entirely certain that a full Trinitarian baptismal formula—such as the one recounted in the Gospel of Matthew—was in use from the very beginning; initially, the Apostles and disciples baptized in the name of Jesus alone, while the practice of baptizing in the name of the Trinity represents a subsequent theological development inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, one thing remains certain: to become a disciple of Jesus (to join the faith), one must receive baptism. Baptism thus becomes a mandatory condition for attaining salvation, for through this Sacrament, the believer is reborn in Jesus Christ—He who died and rose again.

It may be difficult to articulate this to those outside the Christian faith; yet, all those who—whether through their own religious tradition or through the voice of their conscience—lead lives of goodness and holiness are, by implicit right, in Christ (*having received a baptism “of fire”*). Likewise, those who dare to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their faith or for the sake of Charity—even if they have not yet received the Sacrament of Baptism—are, by implicit right, fully in Christ (*having received a baptism “of blood”*). Therefore, receiving baptism—whether explicitly or implicitly—is indeed necessary for salvation.

### **3. Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.**

The commandments of Jesus occupy a preeminent position and permeate the entire Gospel of Saint Matthew, being distributed across five distinct discourses. Now, Jesus commands His disciples to teach all nations to observe everything that He has revealed to them. Thus, after having followed the Lord and received baptism, every Christian—rather than simply receiving the sacrament of initiation and then doing nothing further—is required to observe the laws of God. To put it in everyday language: to belong to the faith means one must practice and live out that faith; one must not merely bear the title of "Christian" by virtue of having been baptized, while living like a stranger to the faith—like one who possesses no belief at all.

### **4. "I am with you always, until the end of the age."**

Once again, we hear a reaffirmation of the truth conveyed by the name "*Emmanuel*" (Mt 1:23). That is to say, just as the Evangelist Matthew, at the very beginning of his Gospel, quoted the prophet Isaiah—proclaiming, "*God is with us*"—so now, Jesus Himself offers the promise that brings this prophecy to fulfillment: "*I am with you always, until the end of the age*" (Mt 28:20b).

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Jesus, each of us Christians is called to lift our hearts toward the Lord—to fix our gaze upon the heavenly realm, which is the ultimate goal of our spiritual journey. We are called to place our trust and hope in the promise that, one day, we shall return to our heavenly home—our true and eternal homeland—to dwell in the presence of the One we love: Jesus Christ. Yet, anyone who desires to attain that blessed heavenly home must remember and live out the Lord's command found in today's Gospel: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."

*O Lord Jesus, You have ascended in glory to the heavens, having first passed through the trials and tribulations of this earthly life. Grant that we may always set our hearts on heavenly realities, so that we may courageously overcome the trials of this earthly life and remain faithful to Your laws in a life of faith and charity, that one day we too may return to our glorious heavenly home with You. Amen.*