

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

Today we celebrate Christ's ascension into heaven and his commissioning of the disciples to carry on his mission in the world. First we hear Luke's description of those events in the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles. Next we hear words of encouragement and guidance from the Letter to the Ephesians. Finally we hear Mark's account of the Ascension, foretelling the mighty words and acts the Christian community would do in Jesus' name.

Together these scriptures give us a vision of the mission of the church of Jesus Christ--a mission statement of sorts. Like mission statements in our parishes and corporations, this mission statement can help us set priorities and focus our activities. It can guide and support us as we strive to continue Christ's messianic mission on earth.

"Be my witness . . . To the ends of the earth"

The scriptural accounts do not agree on how long Jesus continued to appear to the disciples before his ascension. Only Acts refers to forty days. Until recently every diocese has followed this forty-day chronology in the liturgical calendar, but the time period is not essential to grasp the meaning of Christ's ascension into heaven. For Luke, it marks the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginning of the disciples' Spirit-led mission.

It is common for parishes and businesses to create mission statements to guide their work. Often such statements begin with a vision for the institution. They go on to state what the institution seeks to do--how it puts its vision into practice. For example, a parish mission statement might say: "We are the Body of Christ. Utilizing the gifts of each member we collaborate to bring more and more people into God's reign of freedom, justice, holiness, and love."

Today's scriptures give us a mission statement for the church. It goes something like this: Christ is now working with and for us "at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are to be Christ's witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). We seek to do so by "proclaiming the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) and "building up the body of Christ, until we all attain the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God" (Ephesians 4:12-13).

"A cloud took Him from their sight."

How many CEOs (or pastors!) would have the courage to leave their corporation and trust the employees to run things in their absence? How foolish! How risky! Yet, that seems to be just what Christ did: "He was lifted up and a cloud took him from their sight" (Acts 1:9). Christ knew that

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish Mission Statement

We, the community of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Roman Catholic Church, are dedicated to continuing the mission of Christ by proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising the ministry of charity.

We strive to respond to the Lord's call of discipleship by nurturing a sense of belonging among parishioners and providing opportunities for living out the Gospel while joyfully embracing life and spiritual transformation.

This commitment is our baptismal call and it manifests in worship, education, evangelization, stewardship, fellowship, and service as we desire to do God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our patron saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton, and the teaching office of the Catholic Church.

the Holy Spirit would always guide the Christian community in continuing his messianic mission on earth. ♦