



During the lockdowns, we must have felt emptiness and the loss of a sense of purpose. Actions were limited, and recreations were suspended. All were confined within the corners of their homes and resented being “captive” in their own homes. However, some people turned these moments of being locked down into opportunities to express, learn, and create. We have seen people express their thoughts through the arts, learn new skills, and create new things they previously thought were beyond their capabilities.

People have different reactions towards the lockdown. For some, it meant seeing themselves limited, confined, and empty. For others, lockdown became an opportunity for self-discovery and transcendence.

The Ascension of Jesus tells us that when all we see around us are walls that limit us and confine us, the only way to freedom is to ascend and take the higher road. It tells us to rise above our misfortunes.

The ascension of Jesus is God's undoing of the fall of Adam. It is the corporate rise of fallen humanity. It complements

WE ARE
Never
Empty



by **Fr. Jose Carlos Rapadas**

God's act of incarnating his Word down below and completes the resurrection's purpose. The Word of God became flesh and returns to the Father; this now fulfills the prophecy of the Prophet Isaiah (55:11): “My word shall not come back to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Christ, too, was locked within the grave and descended into the

realm of emptiness. The tomb has become the representation of the brokenness of the world. Christ did not remain within the limiting and confining walls of the grave because he was not empty, and he fulfilled his mission.

Christian faith puts important emphasis on upward movements: Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Christian life is about being nourished by God and fulfilling our missions in this life. Being a Christian is about being connected with the Heavenly Father and exercising fraternal love at the same time. When our loving is rooted in Christ, it is a love that uplifts and transcends.

Emptiness, therefore, is not the destiny of Christians. An empty Christian is an irony because oblivion and God's absence are not part of Christian life. God dwells even in darkness and sorrow because Jesus went into the depths to give it new meaning and make it a ground to encounter his love. In God, there will never be an empty heart, and there will never be failure. For in Christ, despair can also become our triumph in God.

PASTORAL CATECHESIS FOR THE YEAR OF *MISSIO AD GENTES*

Church Renewal Faces Numerous Challenges

Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

The National Pastoral Consultation on Church Renewal (NPCCR), as originally scheduled, took place during the week immediately following the “People Power II” events (January 16-20, 2001) that removed Joseph Estrada from the Philippine presidency; Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo became the fourteenth president and the second woman to hold this office.

There was muted euphoria in the local Church; the event was described as “the gift of national and moral renewal which God empowered the Filipinos to receive.” The tasks ahead were clear: democratic institutions needed strengthening;

confidence in government awaited restoration; poverty beckoned amelioration; the economy needed rebuilding. The Philippine Church's commitment to “renewed integral evangelization” took on new depths and urgency.

Recalling the words of Pope John Paul II in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* where he quoted Luke 5:4: *Duc in altum* (Put out into the deep), the NPCCR final statement asserted: “The challenge for us, the Church in the Philippines, is to do the same. We are called to put out into the depths of Philippine life and society.... Like Peter, we know the frustration of having caught nothing. But like Peter, we know that the One who directs us is the Lord who has renewed all things by his life, death and resurrection. And so we dare to begin again in the task of renewal.”

THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(Acts 1:11)

(Recited when there is no opening song.)

Men of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens? This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven will return as you saw him go, alleluia.

Greeting

(The sign of the cross is made here.)

P — The Lord be with you.

All — And with your spirit.

Introduction

(These [or similar words] may be used to address the assembly.)

P — Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension. Jesus' return to the Father marks the end of his public ministry and his appearance to the disciples after his resurrection. Through his gift of the Holy Spirit, he will accompany them in their task of preaching the Good News, as they build communities of disciples.

Today is also the 55th World Communications Day, which focuses on the theme: "Come and See" (Jn 1:46): Communicating by Encountering People Where and As They Are. Let us pray for the grace to face our brothers and sisters, always in the spirit of truth, that mercy may reign.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

P — Have mercy on us, O Lord.

All—**For we have sinned against you.**

P — Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

All—**And grant us your salvation.**

P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

All — Amen.

P — Lord, have mercy.

All — Lord, have mercy.

P — Christ, have mercy.

All — Christ, have mercy.

P — Lord, have mercy.

All — Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father. Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect

P — Let us pray. *(Pause)*

Grant, we pray, almighty God, that we, who believe that your Only Begotten Son, our Redeemer, ascended this day to the heavens, may in spirit dwell already in heavenly realms.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All — Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD



First Reading (Acts 1:1–11) *(Sit)*

Luke explains that, with Jesus' return to the Father, a new chapter begins: the Holy Spirit will come and he will empower the apostles to proclaim and bear witness to the Gospel, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

IN THE FIRST BOOK, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many

proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 47)

R — God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

A. Tuazon



1. All you peoples, clap your hands,/ shout to God with cries of gladness;/ for the LORD, the Most High, the awesome,/ is the great king over all the earth. (R)

2. God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy;/ the LORD, amid trumpet blasts./ Sing praise to God, sing praise;/ sing praise to our king, sing praise. (R)

3. For king of all the earth is God;/ sing hymns of praise./ God reigns over the nations,/ God sits upon his holy throne. (R)

Second Reading (Eph 1:17–23)

Paul explains that Jesus' ascension means his exaltation at the right hand of the Father. As we reflect on Christ in glory, we are made aware of the glorious heritage he gives to the members of the Church.

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

— The word of the Lord.

All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia (Mt 28:19a–20b) (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. Go and teach all nations, says the Lord; I am with you always, until the end of the world. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mk 16:15–20)

P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark

All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS said to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

— The Gospel of the Lord.

All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Jesus Christ ascends to

the Father to plead with us and for us. Through him we pray to the Father for the needs of the Church and of the world, as we say:

R — Lord, hear our prayer.

C — That the Church, the People of God, may continue to proclaim the message of Christ through the fastest and most effective means that science and technology place at her disposal, we pray: (R)

C — That government and civil leaders may seek to combat the epidemic of falsehood through sincere dialogue and responsible use of language, we pray: (R)

C — That media practitioners may always foster accurate reporting of events, fair representation of diverse points of view, and may they uphold and support marriage and family life as pertaining to the foundation of every culture and society, we pray: (R)

C — That like the Blessed Mary, may all mothers lead their families to a careful and profound discernment in order to interpret and assess information provided by the media, and lead their families in unmasking falsehoods, rather than unwittingly contributing to the spread of disinformation, we pray: (R)

C — That consecrated persons may respond to the Lord's invitation to proclaim the Gospel by word, prayer, and good example, we pray: (R)

C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (*pause*). We pray: (R)

P — Heavenly Father, you have raised up Christ to be our divine mediator with you. Make us serve him by bringing the Good News to the men and women of today, especially through the communications media.

Through Christ our Lord.

All — Amen.



Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)

P — Pray, brethren...

All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — We offer sacrifice now in supplication, O Lord, to honor the wondrous Ascension of your Son: grant, we pray, that through this most holy exchange we, too, may rise up to the heavenly realms.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface I of Ascension

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.

P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All — It is right and just.

P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For the Lord Jesus, the King of glory, conqueror of sin and death, ascended (today) to the highest heavens, as the Angels gazed in wonder.

Mediator between God and man, judge of the world and Lord of hosts, he ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before.

Therefore, overcome with paschal joy, every land, every people exults in your praise and even the heavenly Powers, with the angelic hosts, sing together the unending hymn of your glory, as they acclaim:

All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Acclamation (Stand)

All — When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.



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THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord's Prayer

All — Our Father...

P — Deliver us, Lord...

All — For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion
(Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon
(Mt 28:20)

Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age, alleluia.

Prayer after Communion
(Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)
Almighty ever-living God, who allow those on earth to celebrate divine mysteries, grant, we pray, that Christian hope may draw us onward to where our nature is united with you.

Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Solemn Blessing

P — Bow down for the blessing.
(Pause)

May almighty God bless you, for on this very day his Only Begotten Son pierced the heights of heaven and unlocked for you the way to ascend to where he is.

All — Amen.

P — May he grant that, as Christ after his Resurrection was seen plainly by his disciples, so when he comes as Judge he may show himself merciful to you for all eternity.

All — Amen.

P — And may you, who believe he is seated with the Father in his majesty, know with joy the fulfillment of his promise to stay with you until the end of time.

All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit come down on you and remain with you for ever.

All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go forth, the Mass is ended.
All — Thanks be to God.