

Ascension of the Lord C 2016
Frazee/Callaway

Homily

Mary, our Mother, we give ourselves totally to you as your possession and property. Please make of us, of all that we are and have, whatever most pleases you. Let us be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for bringing the greatest possible glory to God. Amen.

(cf. 2012)

I can think of several time when I went to meet someone and we just couldn't connect. In Crookston, I remember one of my co-workers wanting to meet with me. I waited for him in my office for 15 minutes; all the while he waited for me in his office.

Another time it involved a lunch date. In Crookston there are two Chinese restaurants. I arranged to meet a friend for lunch; he went to one and, of course, I went to the other. Both of us figured out what happened, so as I drove to the other, he drove to my original. Here is the moral of the story: **we cannot meet someone where they are not**. This lesson ought to be easy enough to learn regarding people. It is not so easy to learn regarding our savior.

The disciples watched Jesus as he ascended into heaven. What else could they do but stare at the sky? If Jesus vanished from my midst, I certainly would gape at his last location! Two men in white cloths appeared to the apostles.

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."

I hope that you have had the experience of an intimate encounter with the Lord--a time when you were certain of the Lord's presence, and in his presence you experienced a profound sense of peace and contentment. These experiences are a gift from God, and never can we recreate them as our own inventions.

As an intimate encounter with the Lord comes to its natural conclusion, we will most likely respond as the apostles did. We are left standing, staring at the sky. We grasp to hang on to the experience. We desperately try to insert ourselves into a timeless dimension where the world goes away and we retain what we long for most—the peace and contentment that can come only from the Lord. If we hang on too long, angels might appear with the question, "Why are you standing there looking at the sky?"

Why are you standing there? What's the alternative?

"Go into the whole world
and proclaim the gospel to every creature.
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved..."

Every encounter with Jesus is for our own well-being and more. The *more* is his commission. His peace and contentment are not for us alone; they are for the world. The peace and contentment that can be found only in Jesus is intended for people who are stuck in the struggle of sin; it is for people who grasp at fleeting pleasures and wake up each morning lonely and empty; it is for good people who have yet to embrace the fullness of the truths of our faith. We cannot stand staring at the place we encountered Jesus when the world is waiting for his paschal love.

Today's opening prayer reminds us of the disposition that identifies us as disciples who are serious about bringing Jesus to the world. We are called to seek *holy joys* and to offer *devout thanksgiving*.

To seek holy joy is to live with Christian integrity. We ought not seek Jesus with half our heart and then seek unholy joys with the other half. An unholy joy is the exhilaration that accompanies sin. It is the passing pleasure that is always followed by guilt and shame. It is the hardness of heart that comes when we refuse to repent and accept the Lord's mercy. An unholy joy is the public scandal we give when we say we follow Christ and act otherwise.

A holy joy is the disposition of a Christian that is attractive to people. It is the deep abiding peace that comes from frequent conversations with the Lord. This is what we have to offer people who struggle with their commitment to the Faith.

We are to offer God *devout thanksgiving*. It is possible for thanksgiving to be fleeting or careless. A careless thanksgiving is the prayer we pray to bless the food with which we intend to overeat. It is to turn to God in difficult times but to find no time for God when times are good. It is the heart that thanks God for a blessing and then covets the goods of a neighbor and is jealous of a friend.

Devout thanksgiving is an enduring gratitude to God in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, in poverty and in riches, until death.

We are called and commissioned to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. We do so with holy joy and devout thanksgiving.