

Refection for Friday 6th Week of Easter 2020

Pope Francis speaks to us about the Ascension of the Lord to his Father in heaven. *"We have One who always defends us, who defends us from the snares of the devil, who defends us from ourselves and from our sins. Let us not be afraid to turn to him to ask forgiveness, to ask for a blessing, to ask for mercy! He always pardons us. He is our Advocate: he always defends us! Don't forget this! The Ascension of Jesus into heaven acquaints us with this deeply consoling reality on our journey: in Christ, true God and true man, our humanity was taken to God. Christ opened the path to us. He is like a roped guide climbing a mountain who, on reaching the summit, pulls us up to him and leads us to God. If we entrust our life to him, if we let ourselves be guided by him, we are certain to be in safe hands, in the hands of our Saviour, of our Advocate. Dear brothers and sisters, the Ascension does not point to Jesus' absence, but tells us that he is alive in our midst in a new way. He is no longer in a specific place in the world as he was before the Ascension. He is now in the lordship of God, present in every space and time, close to each one of us. In our life we are never alone: we have this Advocate who awaits us, who defends us. We are never alone: the Crucified and Risen Lord guides us."*

Jesus' Ascension into heaven constitutes the end of the mission that he had received from the Father and the beginning of the continuation of this mission on the part of the Church. From the moment of the Ascension, Christ's presence in the world is mediated by his disciples, by those who believe in him and proclaim him. This mission will last until the end of history and every day will have the assistance of the Risen Lord, who assures us: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20).

His presence brings strength during persecution, comfort in tribulations, support in the difficult situations that the mission and the proclamation of the Gospel encounters. The Ascension reminds us of Jesus' assistance and of his Spirit that gives confidence, gives certainty to our Christian witness in the world. He reveals to us the reason for the Church's existence: the Church exists to proclaim the Gospel, for this alone! So too, the joy of the Church is proclaiming the Gospel. The Church is all who are baptized. We are called to better understand that God has given us the great dignity and responsibility of proclaiming him to the world, of making him accessible to all humankind. This is our dignity; the greatest honour for each of us, of all the baptized!

In the light of the Ascension, we strengthen our steps on earth so as to continue our journey — our mission of witnessing to and living the Gospel in every environment — with enthusiasm and courage. However, we are well aware that this does not depend first and foremost on our strengths, on our organizational abilities or human resources. Only with the light and strength of the Holy Spirit can we effectively fulfil our mission of leading others to know and increasingly experience Jesus' tenderness. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us contemplate the heavenly benefits that the Lord promises us, and to become ever more credible witnesses to his Resurrection, to the true Life.