

Father John's Gospel Reflection



Gospel

GOSPEL – SUNDAY, 28 MAY, 2017

- The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

(Matthew 28:16-20)

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection

GOSPEL REFLECTION – SUNDAY, 28 MAY, 2017

- The Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

(Matthew 28:16-20)

Jesus commissions his disciples in a world hostile to Him and his message. By the time this Gospel was finally edited, Jerusalem had been besieged and the Temple there destroyed. Whether the text was written for a particular Christian or Jewish-Christian community remains debatable.

This passage is called the Great Commission. The first thing to notice is this commissioning takes on a mountain. The mountain is often used in Scripture to designate a meeting with God: Moses and Mt. Sinai, the woman at the well when Jesus speaks about which mountain to worship God, the mountain of the transfiguration.

In v17, some doubted, and some worshipped. An interesting contrast, and Jesus does not reject the doubters, and accepts the worshippers. So it is with the first Christians - in spite of his being crucified and risen from the dead, and having made the journey, no one is rejected by Jesus.

In v18 we have one of the most crucial statements Jesus ever made, for Jesus claims the authority of God - to forgive sins, to mediate the Father, to send the Holy Spirit, to open the hearts and minds of His people, to give eternal life, and to raise us up on the last day.

Then we come to invitation to baptise. Baptism was a common ritual back then, practised by groups other than Christians. Here it is about a conversion to the faith - the death of oneself and rebirth into the life of Jesus. Today in mainstream churches Christians are baptised using the Trinitarian formula - be they Catholics, Anglicans, Orthodox, Lutheran, Uniting. Of course, there are cult groups that say you only have to be baptised "in Jesus Name"- Christians who profess the ancient Creeds see this as an error.

Fr John Boyd-Boland ofm

1. Jesus gives us all a commission to convert others – but he will not ask the impossible. Do it where you are – at work, be a living witness, and talk about Jesus.
2. Jesus wants us to finish what he began.
3. What did your baptism mean to you – A social event? Getting you into a Catholic school? That's what the Grandparents wanted? Is it something more powerful than a mere empty ritual?

Take home Message