

“And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you....”

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, there was this legend about the day Jesus returned to heaven. His body still, clearly showed the wounds from his crucifixion.

His hands and feet bore ‘the prints’ from the nails. His side bore the mark of the spear. His back shown the stripes from the whip; his head bore the wounds of the thorns.

*When the people in heaven saw these ‘marks,’ they fell on their knees before Jesus. They were astounded to see the evidence of his suffering. They reacted much like those of us who’ve had the courage to see Gibson’s, **The Passion of the Christ**.*

Then the angel Gabriel rose and said to Jesus:

“Lord, how greatly you suffered on earth! Do all the people on earth know and appreciate how much you went through for them and how much you love them?”

Jesus replied:

“Oh, no! Only a hand full of people in Palestine know that. The rest haven’t heard of me. They don’t know who I am. They don’t know how much I suffered; how much I love them.

Gabriel was shocked to hear this. Then he said to Jesus:

“How will the rest of the people on earth learn about your suffering & your love for them?”

Jesus said:

“Just before I left, I told Peter, James, and John, and a few of their friends, to tell the rest of the world for me. They’ll tell as many of the people as they can. Those people, in turn, will tell as many of the people as they can. In that way, the whole world will, eventually, learn about my love for them.”

Gabriel looked even more confused now. He knew how fickle people are. He knew how forgetful they could be. He knew how prone to doubt they are and apt to twist things around. So he turned and said to Jesus:

**“But, Lord, what if Peter, James, or John grow tired or frustrated?
What if they forget about you? What if they begin to have doubts about you?
And, even if none of these things happens, what if the people they tell get frustrated?
What if they forget? What if they have doubts about you or twist things around about you?
Didn’t you take any of these things into account? Don’t you have a back-up plan –just in case?”**

Jesus answered:

**Sure, I took all of those things into account, but I decided against a ‘back-up plan.’
This is the only plan I have.
I’m counting on Peter, James, and John not to let me down.
I’m counting on the people they tell not to let me down”**

And, here **we** are, 20 centuries later ...and Jesus still has no 'back-up plan.' He counted on Peter, James, and John ...and they didn't let him down.

He counted on the people they told, & they didn't let him down. Now ...Jesus is counting on **us!**

The Feast of the Ascension is one of the most important feasts of the liturgical year. It is the day on which we celebrate Jesus' return to his Father.

We might compare the Feast of the Ascension to the passing of a baton... from one runner to another... in a relay race.

On **this** day, some 2,000 years ago, Jesus passed the 'baton of his work' on to Peter, James, and John. They, in turn, passed it on to the people who came after them. They, in turn, passed it on to us. And, now it is our turn to pass it on to others.

Fine & dandy ...**BUT**, practically speaking, what does this mean? Does it mean our going out and preaching about Jesus as Peter, James, and John did?

Does it mean our mounting soapboxes in Century III Mall, at The Pittsburgh Mills, at Sam's in little Washington... and telling everyone about Jesus -you ask?

Well, I am glad you asked that question!

It could mean that for some of us. **BUT**, for most of us, it means something much more basic. It means something much more fundamental:

it means living out Jesus' teaching in our own, personal lives.

The way to begin preaching Jesus to the world ...is to begin preaching Jesus to ourselves!

There's an old Chinese proverb that says:

**"If there is right in the soul, there will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world."**

So, I repeat: The way to begin preaching Jesus to the world ...is to preach Jesus to ourselves, that is, to begin living Jesus in our lives ...his forgiveness, his patience, his tolerance ...his love! If we do this, his message will ripple outward. If enough Christians would do this, the ripple would become a tidal wave, and that tidal wave would change the face of the earth. It simply begins with you and me...in our own family, in our own parish, in our own corner of the vineyard.

This is the message of today's feast:

"Jesus is counting on us ...and there's still no back-up plan, no plan B!"

"You are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?

It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden....

Just so, your light must shine before others,

that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father!" Mt. 5:13-16

May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen