ASCENSION AND PENTECOST: NEW LIFE, NEW SPIRIT

Occurring one week apart, these two central celebrations conclude the Easter Season, and are about the promise of Christ to walk with us always, and renewal of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Did you know?

- Ascension celebrates Jesus returning to the Father and precedes the release of the Holy Spirit on each Apostle, to go and build Christian communities all over the world.
- Most artists represent the Ascension as Jesus trailing on clouds into the sky, as He goes back “up to God”. This can be misleading...

Instead of using space to describe the Ascension, we can use time as the metaphor, and the story is of Jesus going before us into the future – our future. Jesus, sovereign, is there ahead of us, whatever happens. All shall be well. How might we now live knowing that Jesus is ahead of us in our future? That, whatever happens, our future is safe in the powerful hands of one who cares for us immensely.

PENTECOST FAST FACTS

The feast of Pentecost, occurring 50 days after Easter, is often referred to as the birthday of the Church.

Pentecost is when the Apostles went out among the people and began spreading Jesus’ message, thus establishing the beginning of the Church.

Symbols of Pentecost

Wind: is taken from the noise the Apostles heard as the Spirit descended upon them (Acts 2:2). Flames appeared and rested upon the heads of each of the Apostles (Acts 2:3). A dove serves as a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

LIVING PENTECOST IN OUR DAILY LIVES

During this season of spiritual renewal, we do well to remember the story of doubting Thomas (John 20:26 – 29). When Jesus appears to the Apostles after His death and resurrection, we read that Thomas needs to touch the wounds of the risen Christ to believe it was Him. We are quick to see Thomas as faithless. At times, we can all identify with Thomas ourselves.

Another way of looking at the story is that the point of putting the hands in the wounds wasn’t a type of proof of resurrection. John tells Thomas’ story to give us clear directions on how to “see” the risen Christ. It is only by touching the wounded-ness of Christ, we are able to experience Christ as risen and alive. In our day-to-day lives, when each of us reaches out in care and concern to those who are in need, that is when we are most fully alive in Christian faith. On one level, Thomas was disbelieving – how can this be Christ if I can’t feel His wounds? On another level, Thomas was doing what we all must do to encounter Christ in our lives – reaching out and touching the wounds of others: walking with those who are in need, and being a Christ-like presence in their lives. This is the difficult and courageous life of Christian faith we are called to live in the celebration of Pentecost.