

Ascension Thursday 2017
MT 28:16-20

After the Resurrection, the many appearances of Our Blessed Lord were sudden and unexpected:

- at the tomb he appeared to the women, much to their surprise;
- on the Road to Emmaus, he appeared to the two disciples, not realizing at first it was Him;
- he appeared to Mary Magdalene, but she thought he was the gardener;
- he appeared to ten of his disciples in the Upper Room, very unexpectedly because they were behind locked doors;
- he appeared again to the eleven, and this time Thomas was with them;
- he appeared to seven of his disciples by night on the sea, but they did not recognize him until their sizable catch of fish.

But there was one appearance made by appointment:

1. At the Last Supper, Jesus made an appointment by telling his disciples, "But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

2. Jesus confirmed the appointment first through the angel at the resurrection who said to Mary Magdalene and the other women, “He has been raised from the dead, and he is going before you to Galilee, there you will see him.”
3. Jesus himself confirmed the appointment a second time when he said to Mary and the other women, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

The place of the appointment was a mountain, which makes perfect sense as God had made appointments on mountains.

- ✓ Mount Moria was the place of appointment with Abraham;
- ✓ Mount Horeb was the place of appointment with Moses.

And so the Apostles kept their appointment with our Lord on a mountain in Galilee; whether it was the Mount of the Beatitudes or Mount Tabor, is uncertain. But what is important is the appointment was kept.

The reason for the appointment was what scripture scholars refer to as “the great commission” and “the great commission” was all encompassing:

“ALL authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of ALL nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the

Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe ALL that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you ALWAYS, until the end of time.”

I'd like to focus attention on the length of this appointment, as the appointment did not last until Jesus ascended, and that was the end of Him. No, Our Ascended Lord said, “I am with you ALWAYS, until the end of time.” He was explicit to say that He will be with us always. It seems as if the appointment with Our Lord is never ending.

In writing this homily, I was struck by something I read twice by two different church fathers. One was written by St. Augustine, the other St. Leo the Great. Both speak about the whereabouts of Our Blessed Lord while on Earth, and now, in Heaven. St. Augustine says this:

He did not leave heaven when he came down to us; nor did he withdraw from us when he went up again into heaven. The fact that he was in heaven even while he was on earth is born out by his own statement, “No one has ever ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man, who is in heaven.”

St. Leo the Great says this:

They (the Apostles) were able to fix their minds on Christ's divinity as he sat at the right hand of his Father, since what was presented to their bodily eyes no longer hindered them from turning all their attention to the realization that he had not left His Father when He came down to earth, nor had He abandoned His disciples when he ascended into heaven.

It never occurred to me that the Son of God, remained in heaven for the 33 years He was present on earth. So that was good to know.

It's also comforting to know that Our Blessed Lord continues to be with us and bear all the pain that we, as members of His body, have to bear. He showed this when he said things after His Ascension, such as, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" when in fact, it was the members of the Church who were being persecuted, and "I was hungry and you gave me no food," when in fact, it was the hungry of all time who were given no food.

Yes, I take great consolation in the fact of Our Ascended Lord's all abiding, never ending presence in my life and yours, most especially in the Eucharist, with every step I take, with every breath I make, from now, until the end of time.