

Parish of St. Joseph, Morningside
The Solemnity of the Ascension, B

Pulpit Plan

Theme	:	Worship makes Jesus close
1 st Reading	:	Acts 1: 1-11
Responsorial Psalm	:	Ps 47
2 nd Reading	:	Ephesians 4:1-13
Gospel	:	Mark 16:15-20

- Today, New Testament scholars agree that Mark 16:8 (*they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.*) is really the cleverly appropriate ending of St. Mark's Gospel!
- The 'Longer Ending' – from which our extract for this Mass is taken – was added later!
 - Perhaps this addition was made because they wanted to remind Catholic Christians that they cannot say nothing to no one about Jesus!
- Although I think, the disciples must have still been afraid to see Jesus vanish from their sight on a cloud!
- The thought of Jesus no longer being with them, must have made them even more afraid and uncertain!
 - How could they be happy if their friend, so recently returned from the dead, was gone again?
 - Would we be happy if someone we loved went away for ever?
- But St. Luke ends his description of this dramatic event, by telling us that the disciples returned to Jerusalem *“full of joy”!*
- The Ascension might suggest that Jesus is somehow absent from the earthly community of the Church
 - But really, it is not a leaving, a departure or a disappearance of Jesus!
- The Ascension of Jesus, is a farewell scene at the close of a period of resurrection appearances –
 - it is an event that closes an era.
- Now the risen Lord is more profoundly and intimately present to his Church, his disciples, you and me!
 - So, we can be full of joy too!
- This new presence transcends time and space – so we can really believe what we read in the Great Commission at the end of St. Matthew's Gospel: *“I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*
- This constant, powerful and loving presence of Jesus in our lives leads us to praise, to thanksgiving – to worship!
- The Second Vatican Council emphasised that there is, and always should be, a link between our worship and our lives!
 - And this is why worship is part of our Parish Strategic Plan
- When we gather as a community each Sunday, we bring with us all that has happened the previous week, both good and bad

- We bring our joys and hopes to the table, we bring our success and failures
 - And we do this both individually and also collectively as a community!
- Here – TOGETHER, IN THIS PLACE – we rediscover our purpose, our mission, our **why** (what I spoke about last Sunday) and
 - Here, in worship, our lives are transformed and renewed!
- And so, in a very real sense, our worship plays a pivotal role in shaping us, our actions and behaviours!
- But worship is never just about us!
 - It is about God's work in the world and in our particular parish community!
- As T.S. Eliot said: ***“What life have you if you have not life together? There is no life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise of God.”***
- From our worship, we are sent out together, charged up, ready to try yet again to be the body of Christ on this earth!
- The Ascension is the start of a new era – that of the mission of the Church!
 - We are – and we must always strive to be – the presence of God's love in our world!