

Feast of the Ascension

This Sunday we celebrate the **Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord**. We used to commemorate this feast on Thursday after Sixth Sunday of Easter, but it has been transferred to Sunday this year due to the current situation.

One of the things that I have felt in the middle of Coronavirus outbreak, we were not prepared when we first faced it. We were not ready as a nation, as a state, and as the Church. As a result, the initial growth rate of infection showed a quite steep curve. We passed the peak and now are on our way down to the end. We surely want to make a soft-landing. When you go hiking up a mountain, it is usually during descent than ascent that you get injured because you tend to be easily loosened up on your way down. We did not have the luxury to look at other things when we were walking up to the top because we were all terrified by the virus. As we are moving downward, we can take a look at spiritual sceneries that stand before us. During our descent, we need to look at our spiritual state and its surroundings. In other words, we need to prepare ourselves by reflecting and meditating upon our spiritual matters so as to make a soft-landing. Then, what kind of preparations do we need to make?

The disciples of Jesus went up to Mount Olive to say farewell to the Lord. As a matter of fact, the disciples were not prepared to send Him off to heaven. They simply went there to say bye and receive his blessing without much thoughts. So, they were told off by two men dressed in white garments who said, "Men of Galilee, why are you standing intently at the sky?" While they were coming down, they must have reflected upon their mission in the future and shared their thoughts with one another. They must have drawn a conclusion that the help of the Holy Spirit will be essential for them to be aware of Jesus's presence among them and continue His saving mission, thus they will need to prepare themselves well for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

They did it by praying hard together. Besides saying prayers, they did one more very important thing: choosing Matthias to fill the position previously held by Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. This has significant spiritual implications. In order for us to prepare ourselves for the descent of the Holy Spirit, we need to not only pray earnestly for it but also fill something lacking in ourselves both individually, and collectively as a community. We need to replace vices with virtues, or at least to have firm resolution to do it accompanied by strong will and desire. Only when we do that, the Holy Spirit will come down upon us and ignite our hearts with fire of love and grant us His gifts with which we can enthusiastically fulfill our mission given by Jesus. What we are lacking can be love, faith, hope, a forgiving heart, and other virtues. Things that need be replaced can be bad habits, addictions, and mediocre or lukewarm attitudes.

I hope our journey of descent will be a good preparation with fervent prayers and filling/replacing actions or resolutions so that the Holy Spirit may come down to cleanse us and set us on fire of love. In turn, with renewed mind and heart, we will be able to go and make disciples of all nations. This truly is a spiritual soft-landing that we are absolutely in need.