

This past Christmas, as we celebrated Jesus' birth, I reflected with you on one of the quiet prayers of the Mass. That prayer is prayed by the deacon or the priest as he pours a little water into the chalice filled with wine. The deacon or priest says: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." That prayer came rushing into my mind and my heart again, as today we celebrate not Jesus' coming into the world, but His ascension into heaven.

I think, for most of us, we are more familiar with the humanity of Jesus. Think of the events in Jesus' life that we remember throughout the year: the birth of Jesus at Christmas, the temptations of Jesus in the desert during Lent, the suffering and death of Jesus on Holy Thursday and Good Friday. Even in His miracles, even in the Resurrection, there is something familiar and human about Jesus. He was here on earth; He was one like us in all things but sin. It is easy for us to relate to the humanity of Jesus because He became man.

But today we celebrate something different. Today we celebrate those familiar words that we repeat every Sunday in the Creed: "He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty." Today, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus.

This event, perhaps more than anything else in His life, shows us the divinity of Jesus. Though Jesus humbled Himself and took on our human nature, Jesus never gave up His divinity. He is true God and true man. And, in His Ascension to the Father, the disciples were privileged to see the glory of His divinity. This is the glory that is described to us in the readings today: "the Lord Jesus... was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God." This is where Jesus reigns forever with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God. This is the heavenly Kingdom where the Holy Trinity exists for all eternity in one Communion of Love.

But there is more to this mystery of the Ascension than even the incredible event of Jesus being taken to heaven in a cloud. The Ascension shows not only Jesus' destiny, but also our own destiny as members of His Body. Remember that prayer? "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." Jesus humbled himself by coming down to earth and taking on our humanity. But in His Ascension, He invites us to follow where He has gone before us. Jesus invites us to ascend with him into heaven where we will share in His divinity!

This is the promise of the Lord's Ascension. Jesus did not ascend into heaven to abandon us here on earth. No, He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us. He ascended into heaven so that we might follow after Him and share with Him in that same Communion of Love that is the Holy Trinity. What greater invitation could there ever be? We are the members of the Body of Christ here on earth so that we may follow after the head of the body and share with Him in the eternal life of heaven.

But even as we celebrate the Lord's Ascension into heaven, we know that Jesus has not left us alone. In St. Matthew's account of the Ascension, Jesus makes this promise to the Apostles: "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." The presence of Jesus remains with us in many ways: in the Word of God that we read in Sacred Scripture, in our prayer as a community when two or three are gathered in His name, in the sacraments that Jesus gave to His Church, but, most of all, in the Most Holy Eucharist.

Here, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass we find the Real Presence of Jesus. Here, the same Lord who once veiled His divinity under our humanity now veils Himself in what appears to our senses to be mere bread and wine. Here, in the Eucharist the true Body and Blood of

Jesus are made present for us. This sacred Food from heaven is what makes possible our divine transformation. When we eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, we have His life within us. This Eucharist, this Real Presence of Jesus with us on earth is the way that He prepares us for eternal life with Him in heaven.

In a few moments, I will be privileged to hold up for you the Precious Body and Blood of Christ. This is the Body and the Blood of the one who ascended to His throne at the right hand of the Father. As we receive the Body and Blood of the Lord in Holy Communion, let us pray that we too may follow where Christ has gone before, that we too may keep our hearts and souls pointed toward heaven. May we we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity.