

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION

5th JUNE 2011

Jesus revealed himself to his disciples and to us in successive stages, like the pieces of a jigsaw, building and eventually completing our understanding of who Jesus is. Jesus revealed his humanity first by living in our world as a physical person, relating to his disciples as one human being to another.

After the resurrection Jesus showed them that he is more than human. He is divine as well, so the disciples had to learn to relate to him in a different way. Jesus appeared to them visibly, spoke to them, ate with them and even allowed them to touch him but only briefly and in a more spiritual way.

This was a short stage in the relationship to strengthen their belief in Jesus' resurrection and to prepare them for a further revelation.

At the Ascension Jesus made it clear that he would not show himself again. Their relationship with him from then on was to be completely spiritual. They could no longer use their physical senses to sustain the relationship, but, as we were reminded last week, this was not the end of the relationship.

The Ascension was not the beginning of a divine absence.

Jesus completes his revelation of himself by living with us in his Holy Spirit. We shall learn more about the Holy Spirit at Pentecost next Sunday.

The solemn celebration of the Ascension prepares us for the gift of the Holy Spirit, which five young members of our will receive in the Sacrament of Confirmation here next Friday, and which is renewed for us at every Pentecost.

The Ascension tells us not only more about Jesus but also about how we should relate to him and to other people.

We need to relate to him not in the past, not in the future, but right now in the present moment

Immediately after the cloud took Jesus from their sight the disciples were gazing after him in amazement, naturally, but two "men in white" told them not to stand staring into the sky. Jesus has not abandoned them. He will return.

They were not to look back to the past. Jesus has moved on and so must they and so must we. Equally we are not to waste time speculating or worrying about the future, wanting to know dates and times, with every planned.

Jesus has given a clear warning against this. He will not help us to find the answers to these questions. We must live firmly in the present under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Jean-Pierre de Caussade called the present moment a sacrament. We are closest to Jesus right now in the things we are doing and the people we are with.

The Ascension inspires our relationship with other people, too.

Jesus ascended to God the Father in his human body. The human body is good enough for God in heaven. This means that every human body must be treated with the greatest respect.

All bodies are “temples of the Holy Spirit”.

Let’s remember this when we make decisions about our lifestyles and when we have to respond to the demands of other people.

Let’s be ready to protect weak and vulnerable people from abuse.

If we live in the present, alert to the needs of the people around us, we will find Jesus “in the sacrament of the present moment”.

Rev Geoff Carey