

Homily for June 4, 2000
Ascension of the Lord Cycle B

By Father Charles Bowes

Acts 1:1-11
Ephesians 1:17-23
Mark 16:15-20

If not about politics, we do talk about religion.

When I was growing up, the advice I received from my parents was: “Never talk about religion or politics.” This was especially important in our household since mom was a Republican and dad a Democrat...mom was Jewish and dad was Catholic – hence talking about religion and politics was not only unwise, but even dangerous.

In Mark chapter 16 we have a piece of scripture that very likely was not part of St. Mark’s original gospel: “Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature,” says Jesus. Scripture scholars tell us that very likely St. Mark’s gospel ended with the account of the empty tomb with the words, “and they were afraid.” All the stories that we have following the resurrection are the efforts by the early church to put into words the impact that event had upon them – hence the story of the Easter appearances, the story of Pentecost – two stories actually, one in John and one in St. Luke’s Acts of the Apostles – the quiet versus the tumultuous coming of the Spirit; and the narrative of the Ascension. It was an effort by these evangelists to try to help other folks experience something of the power and influence and consequence and freedom and

fearlessness of Jesus’ resurrection. I don’t know if they talked about politics, but they sure talked about religion. And folks were changed.

However it was communicated, the folks in the early church understood that their task as followers of Jesus was not merely to adore God in Jesus Christ, but to proclaim God in Jesus Christ to others. There are millions of people starving for spiritual nourishment that only the gospel can provide. Untold numbers are hungry for a word of inspiration that God loves them passionately, that their sins are forgiven, that faith works miracles, and that the “yoke” of Jesus is easy to bear. Need we be hesitant in sharing this message with our children, with family members, with people we work with, and even with strangers who need help?

At each of the Masses today, some of the folks who were received into the Church at Easter are going to say something to us about their experience of the resurrection through this community. We will be changed by what they have to say – for God speaks uniquely through them as God speaks uniquely through each of us through the world we touch. God gives the strength to speak when we need to about our faith. So I’ll invite Mrs. Klich, our Pastoral Associate, to bid us listen.

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