

May 17, 2015

**Feast of the Ascension**

**Why are you standing there looking at the sky?  
This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return**

*Ascension can only come about once the present has been taken away.  
Ascension stands against accommodating to the Status Quo.*

We can see two features of the Feast of the Ascension. Fr. Ronald Rolheiser explains the first.

**Ascension can only come about once the present has been taken away**

*“Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but only for a while and mostly for the wrong reasons. Physical absence, simple distance, without a deeper dynamic of spirit ends more relationships than it deepens. In the end, most of the time, we simply grow apart. That’s not how the Ascension deepens intimacy, presence, and blessing.*

*“The Ascension deepens intimacy by giving us precisely a new presence, a deeper, richer one that can only come about if our former way of being present is taken away. This is best experienced perhaps when children grow up and leave home. It’s painful to see them go away, painful to say that particular goodbye, painful to see them ascend.*

*“But their hearts are saying: ‘It’s better for you that I go away.’ There will be sadness now, but that sadness will turn to joy when one day soon, you will have standing before you a wonderful adult son or daughter who is now in a position to give you the much deeper gift of a matured self.”*

If I may offer an example. My mother and father weren’t too happy about my leaving home 60 years ago to join the Jesuits. They thought they would never see me again. Then at my first mass after ordination 50 years ago when I gave communion to them, my father looked up at me with tears running down his cheeks. Mother looked up at me with tears running down her cheeks. I stood there with tears running down my cheeks. We couldn’t have been happier or more proud. We all knew full well that it was better that our former present had been taken away for a deeper, richer one. “Ascension can only come about once the present has been taken away.”

Fr. Greg Boyle, who works with Latino gangs in East Los Angeles, comments on the second.

**Ascension also stands against accommodating to the Status Quo**

*“A theme pervasive throughout the biblical narrative is that God enters our midst to upset the status quo. The Magnificat in Luke’s Gospel where the powerful are brought low, and the hungry are filled with good things was seen as so subversive in Guatemala that the government at one time banned its public recitation.*

*“The truth is that my own puny, tiny-spirited self accommodates all the time to the status quo. We do this all the time. We adapt, we conform, we reconfigure everything so that the status quo feels welcome and at home. Our status quo doesn’t want things to get upset; our status quo is division, polarity, striking the high moral distance. The status quo that lulls us into blindly accepting the things that divide, and keep us apart.” Ascension stands against accommodating to the Status Quo.”*

Jim Wallis, an evangelical minister, offers these examples of standing against the Status Quo:

*“When a huge and successful church in a midwestern state’s suburbs decides to take on the renovation of dilapidated and failing public schools in their neighboring urban area. When a church in the Southern Bible Belt puts up a sign welcoming the Muslim cultural center that had just moved into their neighborhood and befriends those who were afraid of being attacked. When a graduating seminarian decides to start a church made up of homeless people and, after ten years, most all of their congregation’s leaders literally came from off of the streets. When an evangelical mega-church in Chicago sends its people to the Middle East to start speaking up for Palestinian Christians. When faith-based organizations make it clear to both Republicans and Democrats not to balance budgets and reduce deficits by increasing poverty and by drawing a circle of protection around the poorest and most vulnerable. “Ascension also stands against accommodating to the Status Quo.”*

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Ascension happens once our present has been taken away. . . in our selves, our families, our our world. Ascension stands against accommodating to the Status Quo . . . in our relationships with people of other color, nationalities or faiths.

Let us not be afraid to move beyond our comfort zones,  
for Christ’s Ascension assures us we will be all the better for it.

**So, Happy Ascension Feast Day, Everybody!**