

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

05/20/12 Ascension B

-- Once there was a beautiful statue of Jesus that stood in the center square of a European town. During WWII the statue was damaged when the town was bombed. Some townspeople repaired the statue as best they could, but the hands were destroyed.

-- Instead of making new hands, one of the people put a sign on Jesus when his statue was put back up. It read *I have no hands but yours.*

-- In a very real sense, the Ascension was Christ's way of saying that same thing to his disciples. He could not stay with them physically forever. They had to be his hands in the world.

-- Here they were, still quite scared, not sure of what was going to happen, and Jesus tells them this. But he also assures them that the Holy Spirit will be with them to give them the ability to witness to his power.

-- At that point in time, they had no idea of how far this work would take them. I'm sure Thomas could not imagine he would end up in India, if he even knew where that was (but tradition says he went there). I doubt Simon Peter thought he would go to Rome, the center of that world.

-- And, at least in his human consciousness, Jesus himself likely had no idea of a Church existing some 2,000 years later in a place called the United States, across an ocean many times bigger than the Mediterranean Sea.

-- But God's word would literally spread to the ends of the earth over the centuries in the Father's providence. And we have inherited that commission from the original apostles. We are God's hands at work in the world today.

-- For, even though God's message has spread to the ends of the earth, it must be proclaimed over and over. Otherwise, it will be lost in the maze of voices in our modern world that substitute money, fame, power, sex, popularity or any other false god for the power of God shown through Jesus Christ.

-- We have picked up the baton, so to speak. And how do we witness to Jesus Christ today? We do that first and foremost by being messengers of God's love. For how else will people know God's love if not through the love God's followers show to them?

-- And that love, as St. Paul reminds us, is patient, kind, not boastful or resentful. Love is willing to endure difficulties, to be self-sacrificing as Jesus was. Do people see that in us?

-- To the extent they do, we are effectively God's Church, his gathering and presence on earth. To the extent that they do not, we fail in our essential mission.

-- Like the original apostles, we take up that mission in fear and trembling. But we also have the power of the Holy Spirit. It is first given to us at Baptism and reinforced in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

-- May the power of the Holy Spirit help us to know the surpassing greatness of God's power for us who believe, so we can truly be the hands of Jesus Christ on earth today.

-- For he has no other hands than ours.