

05/08/16 Ascension C

-- About a month ago, I stood on the Mount of Olives at the site many believe was the place from which Jesus ascended into heaven. It was the first site our group visited in the Jerusalem area that Thursday we came into Jerusalem from the Sea of Galilee.

-- We had taken overseas flights which lasted over 10 hours to get to the Holy Land. We were over 6,000 miles from home. But Jesus' entire lifetime was spent in an area which could easily fit into the western half of the state of Ohio. And that would include all his travels.

-- Whether it occurred on the Mount of Olives or a couple of miles east of that in Bethany (as the gospel seems to indicate), Jesus' ascension is the moment he handed over the mission of spreading his word to his disciples. It was now their work.

-- Humanly speaking, Jesus did not know how long that mission would last in terms of years. I seriously doubt he thought it would still be going on 2,000 years later, and I know his disciples didn't expect that to happen. Yet, here we are, still charged with spreading the Gospel message.

-- A number of those disciples went out to the ends of the then-known world. For example, Thomas is said to have established some of the first Christian communities in India.

-- And, as years have passed, many Christian missionaries have gone into virtually every corner of our world. They have witnessed to the fact that Jesus Christ came to save all men and women, not just a select few.

-- But many more dedicated followers of Christ have heeded his words *Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high*. These men and women have spread God's word by being good teachers of their children and grandchildren in the ways of faith.

-- They have witnessed to Christ by the way they have conducted themselves in the workplace. They have spread the Word of God by their

efforts to make their local communities better places for all, especially for those in need.

-- Yes, some young men have answered the call to dedicate their lives to Christ's ministry in the priesthood. And we still need more men willing to answer that call, and families open to their sons answering the call.

-- Some women and men have responded to the Lord's call to follow him in the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in the religious life. We continue to need that witness as well.

-- But the majority of faithful Christians witness to Christ in their ordinary lives, through their families, work, community service and overall lifestyles. That call is no less important than the call to go to remote ends of the earth.

-- As inspiring as it might be, we don't need to fly off to the Holy Land to be motivated to do God's work. There is plenty to do here in northwest Ohio. There are many opportunities to stand up for what Jesus Christ has taught us.

-- Today is Mother's Day, and we know that Christian mothers are critical to nurturing and spreading the faith. We bless and thank our mothers for what they have done to nurture our own faith.

-- And we pray that we can be faithful witnesses to Jesus Christ in whatever situations we find ourselves in. For we, too, have been clothed with power from on high and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

-- Once we truly believe that, there is no stopping the power of the witness we can give to Christ's life in today's world.