

## Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

### Cycle C-2022

I am a fan of superhero movies for a multitude of reasons. One reason is that it provides me with a mental picture and helps stimulate creative reflection concerning the eternal dimension of reality. Dr. Stephen Strange is a superhero who has the power to create portals to other dimensions with a circular movement of his hands. During this process, a round hole appears, and by stepping through it, he can immediately be in another location, country, or universe, and experience whatever joy, sorrow, or activity that is going on at that time.

Do you realize that whenever we move our hands in this way(sign of the cross), we create a portal to God and the heavenly realm which enables us to experience communion with God. A portal is a “door” to another place or plane of existence. This helps me to more fully grasp how in the eternal realm a door can be opened to a new level of existence characterized by either love and joy, misery and hopelessness, or healing that prepares us to fully and forever encounter God.

In our reading from the Acts of Apostles, the sacred author reveals how in the presence of His disciples, “Jesus was lifted up and a cloud took Him from their sight.” In other words, at the end of His earthly life and ministry, Jesus passed through the portal or door that led Him to the heavenly dimension of reality. Our reading states that the disciples were “looking intently at the sky as He was going.” From a spiritual perspective, we are called to spend our lives looking up to the heavens. This means that as we go through life, we are to keep our gaze intently on the Lord and the eternal dimension of reality.

There are personal and spiritual benefits in doing so. By looking up, we are continually reminded that the ultimate purpose and goal of human existence is union with God, that encompasses yet transcends our earthly existence. Nonetheless, amid our daily responsibilities and activities, we are habitually tempted to approach them in a manner that take our eyes off God. It is true that we are called to live in the present moment, but in a manner that brings a Christ consciousness to every encounter and situation. With this spiritual awareness, we approach everyone and everything with the intention of glorifying God by connecting Him to every aspect of

our lives. By continually looking up to Jesus Christ and the heavens, we can see creation through His eyes and with His heart. People, animals, nature, and experiences become a portal or door through which we raise our minds and hearts to God and the heavens, in a spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Since we are seeing reality through “Christ eyes” and a “heavenly” perspective, we seek to protect, promote, and cherish, the dignity and grandeur of all that God has made.

As we go through life, looking up to Jesus, we become aware of the passing nature of earthly reality. This growing epiphany can facilitate a healthy and holy focus on the “meat and potatoes” of reality. I am talking about God and our union with Him in both in life and death, love, mercy, and truth. We want to center our earthly lives around those things that eternally endure, and these are the realities that “live forever.” As we look to these things, we develop a discerning spirit that detects those attitudes, values, and behaviors, that are illusions, detours, dead ends, and that lead to earthly and eternal disappointment and unhappiness.

I know this sounds strange to our modern ears but looking up to the heavens provides us with hope for the future. Our individual and collective aspirations to “live

forever” are confirmed and fulfilled through Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection. The portal or door to the heavenly dimension of reality has been opened for us and we can walk through and encounter a union with Jesus that is far beyond our capacity to comprehend. The Sacred Scriptures provide us with attractive images to describe this heavenly dimension: a wedding feast, a banquet, the Father’s house where there are many dwelling places and a place personally prepared for us, paradise, the Promised Land, and a place of light and peace where there is no sorrow and pain of any kind. Sign me up for this heavenly dimension of reality! But as country singer Kenny Chesney sings, “Everybody wants to go to heaven, just not yet.” Isn’t that true for so many of us?

Looking up to Jesus has the power to deliver us from our habitual tendency to ignore and fear death. We begin to see death as the portal that allows us to experience the ultimate purpose of our lives, which is the full and everlasting consummation of our relationship with our Trinitarian God. We become inwardly free to live with joy as we focus and embrace those realities that make this life meaningful and that eternally endure.

As breathtaking as this may sound, we often look down as we get mired down like quicksand, in our sufferings, sins, weaknesses, and limitations. This brings to mind the words of Michael Irvin, a former wide receiver of the Dallas Cowboys. At the end of his fantastic Hall of Fame enshrinement speech, he mentioned how he had cried out to God about why he had gone through so many peaks and valleys during his life. He contends that a voice came over him and said, “Look up, get up, and don’t ever give up. You tell everyone or anyone that has ever doubted, thought that they did not measure up or wanted to quit. You tell them to look up, get up, and don’t ever give up.”

Looking up to the Lord as we go through life provides us with an earthly and eternal resolve which comes from the divine power of God. That is the transforming and saving power of “looking up.” So let us spend our lives doing so. It will make all the difference in our earthly and eternal destiny.