

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS POINTS TO THE FACT THAT WE ARE SOJOURNERS ON EARTH

Sometimes, events around us make us think about life. During the funeral of Fr. Tony Stubeda on Monday last week, I thought about life on earth and life hereafter. I asked myself if all the people present at the funeral Mass believe they will die one day. If we believe that we shall leave this Earth one day, why are some people finding it difficult to love others as Jesus commanded, why are people fighting each other, why are people envious of others? We are sojourners on Earth or our stay on Earth is temporal. **WE CAN NOT LIVE ETERNALLY ON EARTH.** Most religions in the world now believe in the afterlife. Each of us is not only made up of a mortal body, each one of us has a spirit or soul too. Most schools of thought believe in the visible or corporeal and invisible or incorporeal components or aspects of a human being. After death, the mortal or human body decays or returns to dust, and the immortal spirit or soul lives on. God is eternal and Spirit (John 4:24). We resemble God in His immortal nature because of our spirits. Remember that the book of Genesis pointed out that we were created in God's image and likeness. Our human body decays because it is corrupted by sin unlike Jesus' body and that of the Virgin Mary which did not decay because they were not corrupted by sin. Today, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus' glorified body to Heaven. The Ascension was witnessed by the disciples of Jesus. An Angel told the eyewitnesses of Jesus' Ascension that the way Jesus ascended is the way He will come back again. Our Muslim brothers and sisters, also, believe in the Ascension and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The Ascension of Jesus and the Second Coming of Jesus point to the fact that we are on earth temporarily or that Earth is a tourist place. It is an undeniable fact that some of us may not like to leave the Earth despite the challenges in earthly life, but the truth is that we are not going to live forever on Earth. Our ancestors or some of our family members who visited this tourist site have gone back. **ONE DAY EACH OF US WILL LEAVE THIS TOURIST SITE.** Each of us will determine where we shall go when we leave this tourist site with how we live our lives. Before Jesus ascended to Heaven, He told His disciples that He would go to prepare a place for them, after which He would come back to take them to be with Him (John 14:3). This assertion from Jesus points to His ascension to Heaven and our departure from this earth. **HEAVEN IS OUR TRUE HOME. WE ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN THROUGH OUR BAPTISM.** We cannot travel to Heaven without the necessary traveling documents. The traveling documents that we need are our good deeds or the lives we lived as Jesus taught, commanded, and instructed. The Holy Spirit is our traveling agent. He will help us to get the necessary travel documents if we allow Him. The Holy Spirit reminds us of and helps us to understand the will of God. Jesus pointed out in the Gospel according to Matthew 7:21-23, that the only people that will enter the Kingdom of God are those who do the will of God. The will of God or the way God wants us to live our lives on earth is for our good. If you think about the will of God for us as revealed by Jesus Christ objectively, you will discover that they are for our good or benefit. The benefit of doing God's will starts in this world and reaches its climax in Heaven. Doing the will of God is not very easy, we need God's grace and support or encouragement from others. Jesus' Ascension to Heaven is not to make Himself absent or far from us but to bring Himself closer to us through other means. Jesus makes Himself present in the Holy Eucharist. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus enters our

hearts and lives. At the confessional, through a human agent, Jesus forgives our sins. GOD MADE HIMSELF VISIBLE IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST WHO MADE HIMSELF VISIBLE IN SOME OF THE THINGS AVAILABLE IN THE WORLD. God has done everything possible to make sure we do His will on earth to qualify to be with Him in Heaven when we leave this world. Even if you do not believe in Heaven try to do the will of God so that after your death and you discover that there is Heaven you will not lose anything. Today, I thank God for the gifts of our mothers and all women. Women have played important roles in our churches, families, and societies. Your motherly or maternal love has kept most of us going. Thanks a lot, and I wish you a blessed Mothers' Day. MAY GOD HELP US TO CONSIDER THE AFTERLIFE IN WHATEVER WE DO ON EARTH, AMEN.