

THE QUESTION OF THE WEEK

This past Thursday was Ascension Thursday. It occurs exactly forty days after the Resurrection of Jesus from the tomb. In many dioceses around the country the feast of the Ascension has been transferred to the next Sunday and celebrated as part of Sunday's liturgy. Philadelphia and a few other dioceses like New York have opted to celebrate this feast on Thursday. It is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

Why is the Ascension of Jesus a big thing? The resurrection from the grave is the most significant even in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. We who believe in Jesus believe him to be the only-begotten Son of God. We profess this simple truth every Sunday when we profess our faith and recite the creed. It is what we believe. Jesus is the One in whom we believe. Jesus himself said to his apostles when he told them he was returning to the Father, to the One who sent him on his earthly mission, that it was better for them that he go. Why?

Because when he Ascended to the Father, the Father and Son were reunited in a tremendous homecoming victory parade. Death, which was unleashed on God's creation because of sin, had been overcome. But that was only step one. Step two was equally important. Empowering humans with a divine power enabling them to live the way shown them and taught them by Jesus of Nazareth. We may want to live that way but we cannot—without being helped, assisted, empowered. How does that happen? Well, the Son who triumphed and the Father who sent the Son, together breathe their very own Spirit of Love upon us. The descent of the Holy Spirit on the tenth day after the Ascension is the necessary empowering for us to live the way of Jesus. Without the Spirit, we cannot live Jesus' way. Without the reunion of the Father and Son they cannot breathe forth their mutual Spirit. But the Spirit has been given. We are empowered. We can be his disciples. Today. In this world. By his grace—and his Spirit.