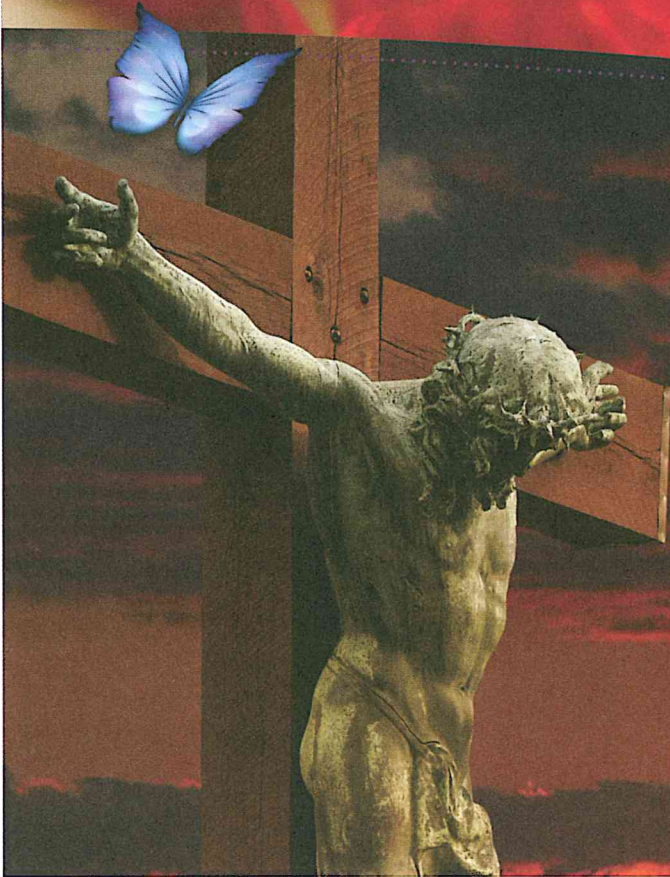


May 20, 2012

ASCENSION OF THE LORD / SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Easter



*No human power
can compare with
“the surpassing
greatness of his power.”*

EPHESIANS 1:19

SHUTTERSTOCK

It’s intriguing what qualifies as power in our world. As I write this, debates are ongoing about the right to carry concealed weapons. Whether such a right keeps people safer is in question, but certainly it makes people feel more powerful. The 2012 presidential campaign is in full swing, months before anyone casts a vote. Our democratic process is marvelous, but the campaign to determine who gets presidential power is, sadly, a messy and undignified process. And my husband and I are currently overwhelmed by the power of nature as water seeps (and sometimes pours) into our home. We thought our house was as powerful as Noah’s ark, but it’s proving far less mighty.

We certainly have the ability to wield power, but we often forget that ultimate power belongs to God. Our Ascension readings remind us that no human power can compare with “the surpassing greatness of his power for us who

believe” (Ephesians 1:19). As if Jesus’ incarnation and his resurrection weren’t enough of a display of God’s power, now Jesus ascends to heaven to his glorified place with the Father. God’s mighty actions make our guns, authority figures, and defenses seem weak by comparison.

Perhaps we forget God’s great power because it’s not as visible as our human displays of power. Yet God continues to work mighty deeds—we know of amazing miracles that can be ascribed only to God’s power. But also, God’s power works in us—the Church. We have to be open enough to let God work through us, and that can be a challenge.

But Jesus promised to be with us always. If we trust in his very real power moving through us, we’ll be amazed at what can be accomplished in our friendships, families, neighborhoods—even in our world.

Today’s Readings
 Acts 1:1–11
 Eph 1:17–23 or 4:1–13 or 4:1–7, 11–13
 Mk 16:15–20

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JANEL ESKER
sundaybulletins@liguori.org

Did Jesus' body ascend into heaven?

Q I've always heard that Jesus ascended into heaven body and soul. Why would Jesus need his body in heaven?

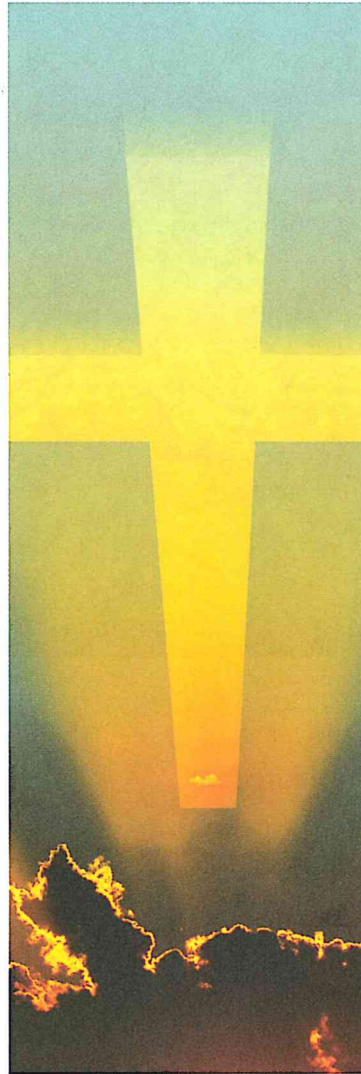
Judy

Dear Judy,

The Gospels do not use "body and soul" language with respect to the Ascension. Mark 16:19 and Luke 24:51 say that Jesus was simply "taken up" into heaven.

However, if we are speaking of bodies, souls, heaven, and the Ascension, it might be good to remind ourselves that in the Apostles' Creed we proclaim our belief in the resurrection of the *body* and life everlasting.

Sometimes it seems that Christians are hoping only that some spiritual part of



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ourselves, a "soul," will go to heaven and remain there happily with God forever. But that is not our hope.

After his death, Christ did not ultimately become a disembodied spirit. He gained a new kind of body. Christ ascended into heaven not as a soul carrying useless baggage, but as the first fruit of a new creation and as a pledge of the ultimate marriage of heaven and Earth.

Christ's resurrected and ascended body is a foretaste of what we hope for ourselves. We don't long to enter a heaven where bodies will be unnecessary. We hope for the day when all things will be transformed and, in our resurrected bodies, we will enjoy the glorious union of heaven and Earth.

BYRON MILLER, CSSR
sundaybulletins@liguori.org

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|
| May 21 Easter Weekday | May 22 Easter Weekday | May 23 Easter Weekday | May 24 Easter Weekday | May 25 Easter Weekday | May 26 Saint Philip Neri, priest | May 27 Pentecost Sunday |
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| Acts 19:1-8 Jn 16:29-33 | Acts 20:17-27 Jn 17:1-11a | Acts 20:28-38 Jn 17:11b-19 | Acts 22:30; 23:6-11 Jn 17:20-26 | Acts 25:13b-21 Jn 21:15-19 | Acts 28:16-20, 30-31 Jn 21:20-25 | Acts 2:1-11 1 Cor 12:3b-7, 12-13 or Gal 5:16-25 Jn 20:19-23 or Jn 15:26-27; 16:12-15 |