

CATHOLIC HOMILY

Homily Transcript

May 17, 2026

Well, there's some farewells that need to be said today. For starters, we say farewell to our graduates, the seniors from our parish who are graduating high school today or in the coming weeks. And it's also a farewell for myself because this is my last weekend that I'll be here as a deacon at St. Peter. And it's been a great semester. And I just wanted to, just from the get-go, just say a word of gratitude and thanks for just allowing me to come in to your parish family in the middle of January and be a deacon here. It's been a joy that I wasn't necessarily expecting.

I knew it was going to be a good experience to be at a parish just before ordination, but I didn't expect to actually feel like I belonged, you know, to the parish. And it definitely feels like I'm a part of this parish as I leave, just because people are good people, men and women of simple faith in the salt of the earth. And so it's been a great joy to be a part of your families, to be at the school, and to be involved in all parts of the parish this semester. So I'm grateful to Jesus for that gift. It seems kind of fitting or providential, you could say, that I'm leaving on the day of the Ascension when we celebrate Jesus leaving earth, ascending to heaven, to the realm of heaven.

And I've learned something this semester that sometimes, especially kids in the school, the younger kids, they need to have clarification to not be confused about things that are associated with each other, but not necessarily causes of each other. For example, many people thought, many kids thought, I was a scientist St. Peter's this semester because my name was Peter. And likewise, they think I should stay here as a priest because my name is Peter. I have to clarify that just because my name is Peter does not mean that's not the reason why I'm here. So likewise, just because I'm leaving today on the Ascension does not mean I am Jesus. That's sometimes these clarification.

But I am leaving today and our graduates are leaving today as well. And our departures are different than the departure of Jesus. So the graduates and myself were leaving and so is Jesus in a way. He is leaving the realm of earth and going to the realm of heaven. And these two departures are actually quite different. And they're quite different because the Ascension, Jesus's departure from earth to the realm of heaven, is our greatest hope. It is our greatest hope. And my departure, I hope, is not your all's greatest hope because that would be messed up after six months being here. And I don't think the graduates departure is the parents' greatest hope.

Maybe they're ready for them to leave the household and all that. And maybe you guys are excited to stretch your wings and leave the household. But we do have some sadness when we leave. There's something good about being sad and with grieving. But Jesus's departure is different because there is a

great hope that is founded on today's feast. And that great hope is twofold. One, we have this great hope and confidence and certainty that Jesus will return. Jesus will return. I think there's a 3% chance I return as your priest, as the associate. I have no idea. The graduates will return occasionally, but Jesus will for sure return. And that's spoken of clearly in our first reading in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Apostles are looking up, just gazing up at in the sky. And the angel says, men of Galilee, what are you doing looking at the sky? Are you not aware that Jesus will return in the same way that he came? And we have this confidence and this expectation that Jesus Christ will come back in the Second Coming. And he'll come back in the same way that he actually left from the East, from the ancient Middle East. And our liturgies and our architectures of our churches actually speak to this reality. The traditional orientation of a church is to actually be facing East. And so this church here at St. Peter's is actually facing East, which is pretty neat.

And we come to Mass every Sunday reminded of the fact that we are awaiting the Second Coming. We are awaiting the time when Christ will come and make all things well and new. And so our orientation expresses that reality. So that's our one greatest hope. That's the one part of the fact that the ascension is our greatest hope. Jesus will return. The second one is perhaps a little bit more pertinent to our everyday life. The second part of this twofold thing is that the ascension reminds us and allows us to know that where Jesus goes we also will follow. There's this axiom you can say in the patristic theology.

So the fathers of the church who followed after the apostles and read scripture, interpreted scripture, and spoke about important matters, the church fathers would always say that what Jesus did not do he did not redeem. So in other words, in order for us to have something, Jesus had to do it first. So in order for us to have forgiveness of sins, Jesus had to die on the cross and to earn our forgiveness of sins. In order for us to receive baptism, Jesus himself had to be baptized. In order for our human nature to have the ability to go into the realm of heaven, something outside of this world, Jesus had to do that as well. So today, the Feast of the Ascension, we acknowledge that reality.

That where Jesus goes, our human bodies will also follow. And that is a great source of hope. And our readings and our prayers within the mass speak to this reality. I don't know if you caught it, but the opening prayer says, gladden us with holy joys, almighty God. And make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving, for the ascension of Christ your Son is our exultation. And where the head has gone before in glory, the body will follow in hope. So Christ the head, where he goes in glory, our bodies will follow in hope. And then the prayer over the offerings, the prayer just before the Eucharistic prayer, it says, we offer sacrifice now and supplication, O Lord, to honor the wondrous ascension of your Son.

Grant we pray that through the most holy exchange, we too may rise up to the heavenly realms. So the invitation today on the Feast of the Ascension is to acknowledge that where Jesus Christ has gone, which we celebrate today, we will follow. So what is left is a response. How do we respond to a feast day like today? And I think the response is just a simple acknowledgement that our lives here on earth are temporary. We are living our life directed to something that we do not have yet, which is the fullness of

life in heaven. I think the temptation for me so many times is to try to make a heaven here on earth, to live a life that's comfortable, that there's good things that I can just rejoice in here on earth.

And all those aren't bad in them of themselves. But I think sometimes the Satan can actually use those to make us immune to the fact that we are living our lives for something far greater than what's here right now. So the question is, are we living our lives aware that we are heading towards heaven? It'd be like beginning a race. If we weren't doing that, it'd be like running a race like a marathon without knowing where the destination was, where the finish line was, or even how far the race was. We have to have our end in mind. In St. Paul, he says this in the second reading. He talks about how important it is to keep our final destination, our greatest hope in mind.

May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call. What are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones? And what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe? I think so many times you and I have this treasure that we don't even, that we're not even aware of. The treasure of our ability for our bodies to be in heaven one day, and that is a great gift. So today on the Feast of the Ascension, we are reminded of that hope, and we are given the confidence that Jesus, who has been given all authority in heaven and on earth, will go to heaven, and where he goes, we also can follow.