

THE ASCENSION

Acts 1:1-11; Ps 47:2-3,6-9; Eph 1:17-23; Lk 24:46-53

IT IS RIGHT TO GIVE HIM PRAISE AND THANKS

Homily by Fr. Michael A. Van Sloun

Sunday, May 20, 2007, 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, May 16, 2010, 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Homily

***Praise my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore his praises sing.***

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise the everlasting King!

("Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven,"

Gather Comprehensive, No. 531).

Praise the everlasting King!

Praise! That is what today, the Ascension, is all about. **Praise!**

Jesus' days on earth were finished.

His **Ascension** and his **enthronement** as King of heaven above and earth below was **God's way to praise his Son** for a job well done.

Jesus received his **Father's praise**,
and Jesus is also **entitled to our praise**.

I'd like to invite you to **play along with me** for a bit, if you would be so kind.

Let's imagine that we are further along in the Mass,

after the gifts, the bread and wine, have been prepared at the altar,
right before the Preface.

There is a **three-part Preface Dialogue**. You know it.

I'll say **my line**, and if **you** would please,

respond enthusiastically and loudly with **your line**. OK?

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Let's stop right there.

We say this line over and over again at every Mass.

“It is right to give him thanks and praise.”

I’d bet that many times we don’t think very carefully about what we are saying.

It is right to give **him, Jesus**, thanks and praise.

It is right. It is a good thing. It’s proper.

Let’s go back to the first apostles.

Let’s use **Peter** as our **example**,

because he was leader and spokesman of the group.

Jesus was very good to Peter.

Peter had a **mother-in-law** who was **sick** with a **fever** (Lk 4:38),
and **Jesus cured her** (Lk 4:39).

Now remember, it is right to give him, Jesus, thanks and praise.

What did Peter do after his mother-in-law was cured?

He didn’t say “Thank you,”

he didn’t show any appreciation,

he did not bow down in worship.

He did not do anything.

Let’s move on to **another Peter event**.

Peter was out **fishing** all night and had **caught nothing**.

So Jesus told Peter, “*Put out into deep water,*

lower your nets for a catch” (Lk 5:4).

Peter did what he was told, and had a **huge catch** of fish.

He had great **success** in his work,

made a lot of **money**,

fed his family.

Remember, it is right to give Jesus thanks and praise.

What did Peter do?

Nothing.

No “thank you.”

No bow in reverence.

No anything.

After that, **Jesus hand-picked Peter** to be an **apostle** (Lk 6:14).

“*Come follow me*” (Mt 4:19a; Mk 1:17a)

“*From now on you will be catching people*” (Mt 4:19b; Mk 1:17b; Lk 5:10).

We never hear Peter say, “Thank you for picking me.”

But it is right to give Jesus thanks and praise.

One windy night **Peter** was in the **boat** with the other guys.

Jesus approached the boat, **walking** on the **water** (Mt 14:25).

Peter decided to get out of the boat,

to **walk** on the **water** toward Jesus (Mt 14:29).

Suddenly **Peter began to sink**, and he cried out for help, “Lord, save me!” (Mt 14:30).
Immediately **Jesus** stretched out his hand and **pulled him up to safety** (Mt 14:31).

Jesus kept Peter from drowning. Jesus saved Peter’s life.

Remember, it is right to give Jesus thanks and praise.

What did Peter do?

No “thank you.”

[Although he did him homage (Mt 14:33),

Peter did give Jesus praise on this rare occasion.]

This goes on and on for the whole gospel.

Jesus asked Peter to join him to **see a great miracle** (Lk 8:51). Nothing.

Jesus invited Peter to be present for the **Transfiguration** (Lk 9:28). Nothing.

Jesus gave Peter the **keys** to the kingdom (Mt 16:19). Nothing.

Jesus gave Peter the **shepherd’s staff** (Jn 21:15,16,17). Nothing.

But it is right to give him thanks and praise.

Peter was not right.

He failed to give Jesus thanks and praise.

And so did the rest of the apostles.

In fact, there is **only one instance** in the **entire gospel**
when **someone gave Jesus thanks and praise.**

Once Jesus cured the **ten lepers** (Lk 17:11-19),

and one, just one, a **Samaritan**, came back,

fell at Jesus’ feet (praise) and thanked him (Lk 17:16).

The Samaritan was the **only one** to give Jesus **thanks** and **praise** in the whole gospel.

After **three years of non-stop service and good deeds**,

Jesus was severely under-thanked, grossly underappreciated.

He **did not get the praise and thanks** that he was due.

He didn’t get it from the **apostles**.

He didn’t get it from the **sick people** that he cured.

He didn’t get it from his **listeners** when he preached.

This **profound lack of gratitude** is **unfortunate, regrettable.**

If the **people** on earth **failed to give Jesus the thanks and praise** he deserved,
someone had to.

And so we have the great feast of the **Ascension** that we celebrate today.

God above did what the **people below** should have done.

In order to **thank** his Son **Jesus** for his **obedience** (Phil 2:8),

the **Father lifted** his **Son** from **earth to heaven**,

and to **praise** him, **God seated Jesus** on a **glorious throne**,

and almighty God **further praised** Jesus by **exalting** him with the name
that is above every other name (Phil 2:9).

The **Father gave Jesus thanks and praise**,
and along with the **angels and saints**,
they made up for all of the thanks and praise that was lacking on earth.
Jesus' **thanks and praise was long overdue**, but it **finally came**.

My friends, we need to **avoid** the **mistakes** of Peter,
and the other apostles, and all the others who were
so **unappreciative**, so **ungrateful**.

Every **Sunday** when we come together at Mass,
it is **time to count** our **many blessings**:
how Jesus has **healed** us when we were sick,
how Jesus has **given success** to the work of our hands,
how Jesus has **rescued** us in times of trouble.
Our list of blessings can and does go on and on.
Eucharist means "**thanks**."

Sometimes people comment to me saying, "I don't get anything out of Mass."
And I regularly reply, "Coming to Mass is not about what we get, but what we give."
We come to Mass to give our thanks and praise,
and if we count up the number of blessings that we receive over the course of just one week,
we would be eager and glad to come to Mass each Sunday
because there is so much to be grateful for.

And our praise and thanks should not be limited to Mass.
Each and every day when we pray,
our personal, private prayer ought to resound with praise and thanks too.
It should **not** be **God alone** in heaven **who is to glorify Jesus**. We should too.

So **every Mass**, right before the Preface,
when the priest says his line, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God,"
let us always **respond** with great **conviction** and **appreciation**, together:
"**It is right to give him thanks and praise!**"
Praise and thanks is not just for Ascension day, it is for every day.

***Praise my soul, the King of heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring.
Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Evermore his praises sing.
Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise the everlasting King!***
("Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven,"
Gather Comprehensive, No. 531).