

**Ascension of the Lord
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Living Catholic in the 808: The Ascension Event Invites Us to a Renewed Hope

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Departures can be difficult. It is hard to let go of those we love and to see them leave us. But, often, the bitter sadness of their absence is offset but the sweetness of knowing that they are going on to greater things and will continue to be in contact with us. The Ascension of the Lord may have been such an experience for the disciples. At first, they seemed set in sadness and shock as they stood "there looking at the sky". But, they later "returned to Jerusalem with great joy". Even as we experience the seeming absence of God in our lives, the Ascension event invites us to a renewed hope.

First of all, "absence makes the heart grow fonder". Only when someone leaves us, do we realize how much they mean to us. We no longer take their love for granted and desire to renew our relationship with them. The disciples more deeply professed their love for Christ, even to the point of dying for him, after he left them. When Christ feels absent in our lives, we are challenged to realize that he is still very much there. We must deepen our love for him.

Secondly, when the disciples could no longer see Christ in the way that they had seen him, they were forced to see him in new ways and in new places. He was no longer limited to the places where he had walked and talked with them. But, they knew that he will still very much with them. They could now see him in each other and in all of creation. God wants to give us the same kind of vision. When we find it difficult to see Christ, God is challenging us to renew our sight.

Finally, it was only after the Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit that the disciples discovered that God had empowered them to do the very things that Jesus had done. The teacher had left them, but the students now realized that they could put into action the lessons they had learned. They were beginning to grow up in Christ. God wants all of us to grow up in Christ; to take responsibility for using the talents and skills that Jesus, the teacher, has given us.