

**HOMILY**  
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In a Catholic grade school, Sister Mary was teaching the story of the Ascension to a class of elementary children. Fascinated by the story, one boy in the class asked Sister Mary, “Sister, how fast was Jesus traveling when he ascended into heaven?” Startled at first, Sister Mary caught her breath and replied, “Well, let’s see. We know that he was not traveling faster than the speed of sound, because the Bible says that he spoke words of blessing to the disciples as he parted from them.” But the young boy was more a child of the space age than was Sister Mary and so he quickly calculated and then came back saying, “Well, then, in that case, he’s not there yet!”

This little story points up the difficulty we have today with the story of the Ascension. When we think about the Ascension of Jesus, most of us have an image of Jesus slowly rising up to heaven, then disappearing from the clouds and out there somewhere in the Milky Way. We would do better to form an image of Jesus leaving us in his bodily form so that he could be more fully present to us in his new body—the Body of Christ, the Church.

It’s not really correct to say that Jesus is now invisible. The truth is: Jesus is now seen in a different way. He is seen through his body, The Church; that is, through you and me. If men and women and youth are not finding Jesus today, it is because we have not made him visible. That’s why St. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of our calling. Our lives are to show forth humility, gentleness, patience and love. Our calling is to be Christ to the world.

When we talk about giving witness to our faith, we usually picture one person telling another person about their belief in Jesus. But it seems that in our day and age, the only form of witness that most people will accept is service. It’s much easier to believe someone when we see that they really live what they believe.

A pastor had gathered a group of workers to train them to witness for Jesus. A young worker was complaining to a veteran caller about one of the people he had visited. “I tried to tell him about Jesus. I tried to tell him about the love Jesus had

for him. I tried to tell him that Jesus was interested in helping him to live a life of grace, to help him with the burdens he was carrying. But the man replied in this manner: ‘I am a poor old man and must stagger under this load of firewood that I had so much trouble in cutting. I can feel nothing of the love of God. I can feel nothing of God caring for my burdens. I can feel nothing of his grace for me.’”

The older, experienced caller turned to the young worker and said, “My son, if you would have offered to carry his load of wood for him, he would have believed in your words because he would not only have heard about the love of God for him, but he would have seen living proof of it in you!”

Here we might recall the advice of St. Francis to his partners in ministry, “Preach the Gospel; then, when necessary, use words.”

Similarly, we hear the words today spoken by the two men in white robes, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?” As the Body of Christ on Earth, we need to look around. We need to look to one another and at those in need. Then, as we reach out in love, we will discover that Jesus never really went away!