The Ascension of the Lord — May 21, 2023

From the Desk of Fr. Leo

Nikita Kruschev once ridiculed Christianity by remarking humorously that his cosmonauts, on their journeys around the earth, had never reported seeing Jesus passing by. His remark may well cause some uneasiness in the most thoughtful modern Christians. What is left of our proclamation of the ascension of Christ if we refuse to take literally the archaic cosmological picture against which Jesus is described as moving from an earth down here to a heaven up there?

In fact, popular cosmological pictures, archaic or modern, have less to do with displaying scientific data about the universe than with bringing out assumptions about the nature of life within it.

The accounts of the ascension of Christ we hear from the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles – as well as in the proclamation of Christ's assumption of heavenly power in the Epistle to the Ephesisans – employ bits and pieces of a cosmological picture which views these matters in a very different way. This picture was already archaic when these accounts were written, and we should not assume that their authors were necessarily unaware that the earth was round or that heaven and earth were not so simply up there and down here as they seem to suggest. Nonetheless, it was a picture which would have been familiar to any reader of Jewish apocalyptic writing, the Book of Daniel for instance, or the passage from the prophet Ezekiel.

In this picture, the universe is certainly awesome. But we are far from aliens in it. It is the work of God, God's glorious throne room. It is run according to God's mysterious purposes, which must finally control the destiny of all of us. If we are "alone and afraid" within it, that is, because his purposes are different from ours. We want to live for ourselves, to promote our own concerns even when they clash with those of God or of our neighbors. We want to run as much as we can of the universe on our own terms, however impossible that may be.

It is against the background provided by this picture that our readings see the suffering and death of Jesus at our hands, and his being raised again to life with God. The picture is in the bckground, and actually only the useful bits and pieces of it remain. Jesus, dead and risen, is in the foreground for all to see. What the disciples have been witnessing these last weeks is the actual, visible event of God's reaching out to reconcile the whole creation, to save it from the confusion it has brought on itself, to bring it back together in the new life of Jesus Christ. There is no question any more about the mysterious purposes of the one who sits on the heavenly throne. They are clear now. If the death we tried to use to stop them will not work, no power can do so.

Fr. Leo Alban Asuncion

Mass Intentions for the Week

Tues.	**May 23**	**11:00AM**
Maria Victoria & Nicholas Valsco †		Pena Family
Wed.	**May 24**	**11:00AM**
Fortunato & Placida Espina		Pena Family
Thur.	**May 25**	**11:00AM**
Rubyncita M. Smith †		Pena Family
Fri.	**May 26**	**11:00AM**
Robert Banaga Sr. †		Bernie & Imelda
Sat.	**May 27**	**4:30PM**
Bill Valli †		John Collins
Sun.	**May 28**	**9:00AM**
Pauline Cardoza †		Jerry & Dee Carone
Port Costa		**11:00AM**
People of the Parish		

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