

**Fr. Nick Dant's Homily, Saint Matthew Catholic Church, Indianapolis**  
**Solemnity of the Ascension, May 12-13, 2018, Cycle B**

If the question is "Why did Jesus leave us, that is leave us physically so to speak, and ascend to the Father; Jesus gives us the answer in John's Gospel at the Last Supper when Jesus gives His last discourse to his disciples! Jesus says: "... If I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

We heard in Mark's Gospel Jesus commissioning us as his disciples:

"Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

We can only proclaim the Gospel if we are empowered by the Holy Scripture to do so. In the Acts of the Apostles we heard Jesus plead with His early disciples not to leave Jerusalem just yet, but wait for this promised gift of the Father to come upon them! "...In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Those disciples did wait, and we know the result of that waiting, a story we will celebrate next Sunday with Pentecost.

Jesus ascends to the Father so that He might release the power of His Spirit upon us, empowering us to be His Body, His Church, making his presence real to every corner of the earth. If Jesus had not ascended to the Father, he would still be limited within our world to one spot, one time and one physical body. Even many people in our modern, cynical world want to encounter Jesus, but precious few would be able to do so. An unascended Christ would be a virtual unreachable celebrity.

So by ascending to the Father, the Risen Christ becomes more present in the world than ever before due to the Holy Spirit being released upon us to be Jesus' Church. Every time you and I, in the power of the Holy Spirit, performs a spiritual work of mercy, or witnesses to Jesus by word, Christ is still at work in the world.

This weekend we celebrate Mother's Day. Maybe Mother's Day is the cue for us to reflect more deeply on that figure of our spiritual mother Mary. Mary is not only Mother of the Church, Mary is the Church in microcosm and thus our model. Luke's Gospel tells us Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit at Jesus' conception in her womb and thus she gave birth to God become flesh in the world. That same Holy Spirit fills the Church, impregnating the Church with the presence of Jesus, and thus empowering us to continually give birth to Jesus to the larger world.