

Ascension of the Lord

Mothers' Day puts mothers' in a difficult position. They appreciate the attention they receive. After all, they go through much of the rest of the year without receiving sufficient attention for the sacrifices they make. But if kids don't send cards, or the gifts aren't quite right, or they end up working harder on this Sunday as they do on every other day of the year, moms feel slighted. The difficulty is that mothers do their best work out of love. When you do something because you love someone, you probably feel that you don't need praise for it. It's nice to receive, but that's not the reason we help. We sacrifice because we love. Still, a little praise is a good idea, and moms certainly deserve it this weekend.

As we celebrate the Ascension of the Lord today, we give Christ praise for all that he has done for us. After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples. Then he ascended into the clouds to reign at the right hand of the Father forever. Today we celebrate the culmination of his life on earth, a life of service to the people he loved, for which he expected nothing in return except faith. In ascending to the Father, he also made way for us. One of the themes we hear in the prayers at mass today is that where Christ the Head has gone, we his Body hope to follow. As Christ dignified humanity by becoming one of us, so we look forward to the day when he will take us with him into the presence of the Father.

All this deserves praise, even though Jesus never seemed to expect it from the disciples. For our responsorial today we sing Psalm 47, as we do each year on this feast. It was probably composed for a procession to the Jerusalem Temple. Either the king was walking in, or the community was processing behind the Ark of the Covenant. In either way, the procession is remembered in verses like this: "God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; the Lord, amid trumpet blasts. Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise." The psalm imagines God going up to a royal throne and sitting there. It serves as prophecy for what Jesus did on the Ascension. He entered into the Temple of the heavens and sits on a throne at the Father's right hand. A good procession calls for music, so we sing Psalm 47.

Mothers are not the only ones who deserve more attention than they get, but today is designated for them, so we try to do the right thing at least for mothers, at least today. Not all moms want the attention, but we probably need to give it to them more than we realize. When we praise our moms, or praise God, we give ourselves the satisfaction of doing what is right. The praise goes to them, but feeling good belongs to us.