

MISSION, PROMISE AND HOPE

- 1—This feast of the Ascension celebrates both a mission and a promise.
 - a—The mission Jesus gives to the apostles & the Church is to continue his work
 - i—The gospel says that Jesus continued to work through the disciples and that he worked with them.
 - ii—But that work isn't over. He continues to work through us and with us.
 - b—The promise is that we will not have to do this work by ourselves.
 - i—We don't have to be the source of this work, but instruments through whom the Holy Spirit works.
 - ii—At the Ascension, Jesus makes a promise and at Pentecost that promise is fulfilled.

- 3—The Ascension is an invitation to hope.
 - a—After the crucifixion, understandably enough, the apostles were *hopeless* or to put it more bluntly, they lost it.
 - b—After the ascension, they were *hopeful*. They held it together. They returned to Jerusalem and continued to pray.
 - c—The visible presence of Jesus has passed into the sacraments. Although Jesus is in heaven, he continues to be present to us in so many different ways.
 - d—Jesus ascends not to abandon us but to call us to hope.
 - e—The virtue of hope isn't some smiley faced optimism.
 - f—Faith means both believing and trusting in what we do not see and hope means waiting for what will come. Or as our opening prayer says, *where the head has gone before in glory, the Body is called to follow in hope.*
 - g—Hope is a virtue that comes from God, not us. Just this week Pope Francis commented that, *If hope is missing, all the other virtues risk crumbling.*

4—Here in the Eucharist our hope is renewed.

a—We're reminded of who Jesus is and of his work. We don't just remember what happened, sacramentally we share in that reality.

b—We're reminded of who we are and what our work and what our mission is.

c—From here we go forward with lives of intentional faith as a people on a mission, with a promise through hope.

5—We continue that work of Jesus in so many different ways.

a—By prayer and service. By worship and sacrament and by being faithful to the duties in our state of life in big ways and every little way.

b—We carry the work of Jesus by seeing and serving him in others. Think of those words, *I was a stranger and you welcomed me, sick and you cared for me and imprisoned and you visited me.*

6—One way we continue that work is by remembering those words, *I was hungry and you gave me to eat.*

a—As a parish we do that through our St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry.

b—I am very proud of the work our pantry does and very grateful for the army of volunteers who staff it five days a week and one evening a month and for all the people of our parish who support it in any way.

c—I think we are a major player in serving the poor of Platte County.

d—In 2023 we distributed about 38,000 bags of groceries as well as assisting on average 50 households a month with rent or utilities.

e—And these aren't just handouts, people are interviewed before assistance is given and there are limits about how often we are able to assist people.

f—99.9% of our clients fall below the poverty line; 14% of those we assisted last year were over 65 and 37% were children.

g—Four times a year we help feed the homeless downtown through Morning Glory Café and in partnership with our parish Altar & Rosary Society sponsor an apartment at Hillcrest Transitional Housing.

h—As I mentioned, this is staffed by an army of volunteers which means that 99.3% of contributions goes directly to client aid.

i–But in addition to all that, there’s something we give to our clients, something real but invisible, something associated with the celebration of the Ascension, and that is hope.

7–Your generosity along with other agencies, grocery stores and restaurants allow all this to happen.

a–Usually this appeal is made around Thanksgiving and Christmas but the needs are year around. In the summer children aren’t being fed at school and utility bills can soar with the temperature so this year we make the appeal in the spring.

b–There are envelopes available in the pews and as always we’re grateful for your help and the ability not just to help people but to serve Christ in them as we share not just food, or utility assistance but something else very valuable–hope.

c–Thank you for allowing us as a parish to continue part of the mission and the hope that Jesus gives to us.