

*Homily for the Friday of the 6<sup>th</sup> Week of Easter*

Yesterday was the Feast of the Ascension, which will be marked liturgically this weekend.

In the Psalm appointed for today is an anticipation of the Ascension. To see this clearly requires we apply an important principle of biblical interpretation that was first articulated by St. Augustine.

*The New Testament is concealed in the Old, and the Old is revealed in the New.*

This influences the way we read the Bible. We need to read it on two levels at once. We read the Bible in a literal sense as we read any other human literature. But we read it also in a spiritual sense, searching out what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell us through the words

This way of reading of the Bible allows us to see the Old Testament as replete with typological stories. Say what, you are saying? Typology. What is that? A type is a real person, place, thing, or event in the Old Testament that foreshadows something greater in the New Testament. From “type” we get the word “typology,” the study of Christ’s foreshadowing in the Old Testament.

So with all of this in mind let’s turn to this verse from Psalm 47:

*God has gone up with a shout,  
the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.*

To read this verse literally requires that we understand something about the Royal Court in ancient Near Eastern Cultures. In the royal ceremonies of those societies, when a king had mounted the dais and assumed the throne, whether on the day of his coronation or on a great state occasion, the surrounding court would acclaim the king’s rule. In the liturgical drama of the Temple the event that may have been portrayed here is a procession bearing the Ark of the Covenant. (24:7–10). So originally this verse was used in a liturgical ceremony celebrating the Lord’s presence enthroned in the Ark.

Now when we look at this verse spiritually and typologically, in light of Jesus, we see how it anticipates his Ascension into heaven. Repeatedly in the New Testament the Apostles refers to Jesus as the Lord. He has gone up to heaven and because of this we can meaningfully hear the next verse of the psalm:

*Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King sing praises.*

What does all of this mean for us today? When we are able to read the Bible this way we discover that there is this wonderful uniformity to the biblical witness underscoring the providential plan of God. This is so important for us to bear in mind, especially when in our lives we experience times of personal struggle and doubt. When the circumstances we are facing are so overwhelming.

When we can have a faith in God that transcends our personal experiences, we can be a people who praise God and clap our hands because our lives are joined to the narrative of God’s story.

In a sermon celebrating the Feast of the Ascension Pope Leo the Great, who was Pope from 440-461 articulated what I am trying to convey to you this way:

***As followers of Christ we put unhesitating faith in what is not seen with the bodily eye; and fix our desires on what is beyond sight. Such fidelity could never be born in our hearts, nor could anyone be justified by faith, if our salvation lay only in what was visible.***

We do believe in a world that is beyond our visible sight. But it is the World that is visibly portrayed on the pages of the Holy Bible. This is the story that when read literally and spiritually can truly orientate and govern our lives.

Today the Church honours and remembers with thanksgiving St. Philip Neri. He was active in Rome through much of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, having been born in 1515 and died at the age of 80 in 1595. He was a man who so trusted in the Lord that he faced great challenges with hope and optimism because he had spiritual sight and insight. Philip's sermons were famous for their wisdom and good humour. It was written of him:

***He read the hearts of men, foretold their future, knew their eternal destiny. His touch gave health of body; his very look calmed souls in trouble and drove away temptations. He was gay, genial, and irresistibly winning; neither insult nor wrong could dim the brightness of his joy. Philip always wanted his followers to become not less but more human through their striving for holiness.***

We prayed in today's Collect:

***graciously grant that the Holy Spirit may kindle in us that fire  
with which he wonderfully filled  
the heart of Saint Philip Neri.***

Such a fire can blaze strong and life-long when we , like St Philip allow the fuel of Scripture to be daily applied to our souls.