

Fr. Romeo Evangelista Homily
Sunday, May 21, 2023
Ascension of the Lord
Cycle A

When we encounter the word 'power', we spontaneously think of something or someone with authority or strength. Or we think of a big machine and the work it can do in terms of horsepower. But there are more subtle forms of power, forms which pertain rather to the things of the soul. For instance, we speak of a powerful orator in reference to a speaker who can move and rouse an audience by his eloquence. Or a powerful teacher who is capable of drawing out the potential of his or her students.

In the like manner we speak of a powerful message, a powerful performance, a powerful example. These are instances when something or someone exerts a particularly strong effect on people.

In all of today's three readings, as we celebrate the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, reference is made to power. In the first reading, Jesus makes this promise to his disciples: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you; then you are to be my witnesses." Jesus makes a connection here between power and witnessing. The power Jesus promises – the power of the Holy Spirit – is not any kind of power; it is a spiritual power. It is a power geared mainly at witnessing.

In the second reading, Paul speaks of the 'immeasurable scope of God's power in us who believe.' Here again, what is referred to is a spiritual power residing in the believer which enables him or her to witness to God's presence in his or her life.

In the gospel reading, Jesus refers to the power given to him by his Father and which he now communicates to his disciples then – and to us, his disciples now.

Before ascending to heaven, he commissions his disciples – and that includes each one of us: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” This is not an option but a command to all who call Jesus their Lord. Of course, not all of us are called to be professional evangelists or evangelizers. But we have all received gifts that we can use in helping to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission. And as we perform this mission, we find comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us.

Indeed, all of us are supposed to be missionaries. But allow me to mention the special role of parents as missionaries or evangelizers.

Bishop Robert Joyce says, “The greatest missionaries in the world, could be and should be parents, they have the greatest opportunities and the most urgent responsibility.” “Their love of God and of their offspring requires that their greatest efforts in life be directed towards making their children truly children of God and disciples of Christ.”

“Parenthood is the number one missionary vocation; when they teach their children divine truth and the moral law, they are making the greatest possible contribution to the good of the world and its people, as well as to the kingdom of heaven.”

Dear parents, you are examples – whether you realize it or not. In our modern world today where many children feel lonely, a family that is seeking to follow Christ and growing in love for one another may be the most powerful message we can bring to a broken world.

As you can see, being a modern disciple, being a witness to Christ – and thus, an evangelizer – does not mean that we have to add more work to our already heavy

workload. We evangelize primarily by what we are. When we are loving spouses, loving parents, loving children, loving siblings – we evangelize.

Why? Because we send to the rest of the world the best message that the world needs to know: that Christ is present to this broken world, present in our hearts and our lives, and reaching out to the world through our open and loving arms.

Anybody can be a missionary. Anybody on fire with love for Christ and with passion for his mission is a light to the world.