

Ascension (A)

May 17, 2026

“Go . . . baptize . . . teach”

Mountains are places of majestic beauty, pointing to Heaven. Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai; Abraham nearly sacrificed on Mount Moriah; Jesus preached the Beatitudes on a mountain, and today, he summons and commissions the Apostles to spread the Good News of salvation.

Three verbs summarize the missionary mandate of Jesus: Go, baptize, and teach. First, he tells the eleven disciples to **go**. Don't stay in one place; take the good news and share it. Travel, move out, and spread the news that Jesus has risen and wants to save each of us. The Church is not a closed-in cultic community, but a joyful missionary community, rooted in the Eucharist and committed to Christ's missionary instructions. We go out, expand our reach, and touch others personally or through social media.

The second word summarizing this mandate is **baptize**. Baptism is the gateway to the sacraments. We can't be reconciled or anointed if we are not baptized. Baptism is our foundation. In this sacrament, we are cleansed, initiated, reconciled, and sanctified by grace. Baptism is the beginning of a life of holiness. This is symbolized by the location of the baptismal font at the church's entrance. As we come into church, we encounter the saving font, dip our fingers in holy water, and make the Sign of the Cross, reminding us of the day we were re-born. Missionaries are to bring people to the font. Men like Saint Peter Claver (d. 1654) did this, baptizing some 300-hundred thousand enslaved people in his lifetime. That is how much good one man can do. We continue this work.

The third word is **teach**. Instruction of parents and godparents goes before baptizing infants, but we need to be taught what it means throughout life. This is called “continued evangelization,” the continual instruction in our Faith. There are abundant resources to learn about Jesus and His Church, as we talked about last weekend. We can use those resources to learn, to grow, to develop into joyful missionary disciples. There are graduates from grade school, high school, and college, but there is no graduation from lifelong learning of the Catholic faith.

The Lord assures us of his presence as we do his work. This is illustrated by the story of some American G.I.'s during World War II, who came into a German village and looked around. One soldier walked into a bombed-out church, and discovered a large statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus --- with its hands blown off. He picked up the heavy statue, carried it out into the courtyard. He wrote some words on a card, and placed it over the neck of the statue. The words read, "Jesus has no hands in this world but ours."

We are the hands of Jesus, pointing to heaven; we are the eyes of Jesus, seeing the suffering in our midst; we are the ears of Jesus, hearing the cry of the poor; we are the heart of Jesus, feeling the agony of those in our midst.

May our Blessed Mother, Queen of Heaven and earth, pray for us on the Journey in Faith. God bless you.