ASCENSION OF THE LORD, and The Christian hope.

Today's readings describe the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into his Heavenly glory after promising to send the Holy Spirit to the Apostles as the source of Heavenly power and commanding them to bear witness to Him through their lives and preaching throughout the world. But the ascended Jesus is still with us because of His promise, "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mt 28-20). He is with us at all times and in all places, releasing a new energy upon the earth, the energy of the Holy Spirit.

Christ's Ascension marks the definitive entrance of Jesus' humanity into God's heavenly domain, whence he will come again (cf. Acts 1:11, and Catechism of the Catholic Church #665.)

Christ's Ascension is the translation of Jesus from this dimension of space and time into the dimension of God. Eternal means outside of time and space, above time. God is not like air – everywhere. God transcends space and time. Because Christ is in that higher realm of God, he is even closer to us, more available to us than before. In the Bible, the 'Sky' and "Cloud' symbolize the realm that is only proper to God. God is eternal.

As Jesus went to heaven, he takes into heaven our human nature, our humanity, and now translates that human nature into the higher pitch of existence. Jesus' Ascension pertains to all of us because that is our hope, not just an escape to the body, but the resurrection of the body, the elevation of our lowly body, to be a spiritual body. Where the Lord has gone, we hope to follow. Therefore, the ascension of Christ is the feast of faith and hope as we look forward to the resurrection of our own body. Ascension is the meeting of heaven and earth. As Christ is seated in heaven above, he directs the affairs of the church.

So, from heaven, Christ directly animates his church. This is what we see in every page of the ACTS OF THE APOSTLES. How is this animation achieved? Through the HOLY SPIRIT whom Jesus sends into his church so that the church might continue his work in the world.

Nearly 2,000 years ago, a match was struck in Palestine. At first, just a few in that corner of the world were touched and warmed, but the fire spread beyond Jerusalem and Judea out to the world and to all people. Acts of the Apostles provides an eyewitness account of the flame and fire – the birth and spread of the church. Beginning in Jerusalem with a small group of disciples, the message traveled across the Roman Empire. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, this courageous band of men and

women preached, taught, healed, and demonstrated love in synagogues, schools, homes, marketplaces, and courtrooms, and on streets, hills, ships, and desert roads – wherever God sent them, lives and history were changed.

On his way to Damascus, Paul was breathing threats and murder, with a letter of warrant from the high priests to arrest, "any who belonged to the Way, men or women", that he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, '***Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?*** He asked, '***Who are you, Lord?' The reply came, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.*** (Acts 9: 2-5).

Look at it this way, Christ lives in us, believers every day:

Christ preached – the apostles preached.
Christ healed – the apostles healed.
Christ suffered – the apostles also suffered.
Christ won the victory – the apostles equally win the victory.
As dynamic disciples of the Lord, may we live and spread His message of love among us every day. AMEN.

Fr Martin Ezeihuaku.