

## FEAST OF FAREWELL

Airport lounges, train terminals, bus stations, goodbye places are all awkward and painful places. Goodbyes are hard to do with grace. Handshakes, hugs, the kiss of tears, the prayer of embrace, and you let go. It's just a wave of goodbye from a distance and then they are gone. Today the friends of Jesus stand in the terminal, the place of "letting go."

Jesus completes his life with them. He says "goodbye." (In old English that meant God be with you or God by you.) Jesus allows them to know the empty space of bereavement. He allows them to discover in that place the coming of the Holy Spirit. He sends them out into the world with a promise that he will be with them. "Yes" to the end of time.

What a wonderful word right there: "Yes." Jesus' final word to them is "Yes" he believes in them. "Yes" he entrusts everything of his life, words, and Spirit to them. "Yes" he will be with them always; when they finally let him go and that is the paradox.

Today we remember in our Ascension prayer the people, who, like the friends of Jesus, stand in the terminal places of tears: those who keep vigil day and night at the bedside of a loved one and struggle to let go.

Today's feast is the prayer of all those who retire, those who try new things, and those who dream new dreams. It is the feast of all who learn to "let go" and complete the past without the need to cling to it in fear, bitterness, or lack of forgiveness. As the Ascension is the feast of letting go, it is also the feast of waiting in the Upper Room for the Spirit to come. From the Ascension to Pentecost is the "prayer of waiting."

Ascension prayer is the prayer of maternity wards, prison cells, and overstretched emergency rooms. It is the prayer of those waiting for the chemotherapy treatment, the school test results, and the ache of grief to ease.

It is the prayer of artists waiting for the spark of inspiration in front of the empty canvas. It is the prayer in the eyes of the refugees who are waiting to go back to their homeland not knowing what they will find.

Today's feast day is a day when the departure lounge and the arrival lounge become one and the same place. It is the feast of saying goodbye to Jesus and waiting for the Spirit to arrive. It is the feast of letting go and holding on, waiting, with bated breath to hear the "Yes," to understand the "Yes" of Jesus.

"Yes" he is with us always, to the end of time. We all have times when we have to let go and times when we are waiting for something. But if you hold on to this feast of farewell and prayerful waiting, you will come to know that.....

YOU ARE LOVED,  
Deacon Dan  
+From Fr. Michael Hayes