

A letter from our Pastor...

St Raymond De Penafort

"Welcome. Love. Serve."

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

As we come to the end of the Easter season, we celebrate the two feasts which complete the foundation of the Church - Ascension and Pentecost. Together with the Resurrection, these events initiate the Church as the fulfillment of the promise of the Kingdom of God. The three feasts together are an act of God as Trinity, and reveal God to us as Trinity.

In the Resurrection, the Father raises Jesus from the dead.

In the Ascension, Jesus is definitively revealed as God who has come from the Father, and now exercises the power of God.

At Pentecost, the Father and the Son give the Holy Spirit to the Church, and the Church participates in the power of God to complete the work of Jesus.

The promise of the Kingdom of God was taken literally in the history of Israel recorded in the Old Testament. There was an expectation that a Messiah would arise from the descendants of David who would realize the ideal of kingship that David and Solomon represented. This ideal is portrayed in the pilgrimage of the Queen of Sheba to the court of Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-13). It is an ideal that Israel will be the place where the nations of the world will come to learn the truth of God that will lead to peace. As Israel drifts from this vision into a vision of competition with other nations, the words of the prophets continued to assure the People of God that the Kingdom would be something greater than some political reality.

Later, in the apocalyptic literature of the Old Testament, the vision of the Son of Man is given. The Son of Man would be a figure who would definitively establish the authentic Kingdom and fulfill the mission of Israel to unite the world in the worship of the true God.

As the visions during the night continued, I saw One like a Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. When he reached the Ancient One, and was presented before him, he received dominion, glory and kingship. Nations and peoples of every language serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not be taken away. His kingship shall not be destroyed. (Daniel 7:13-14)

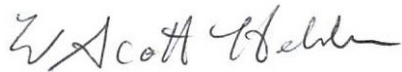
Throughout his ministry among his disciples, Jesus identified himself as the Son of Man. He would fulfill the task given to the Son of Man to re-establish the way to peace in the world. In the Ascension, as he rises up to God on the clouds of heaven, Jesus is publicly manifested as the Son of Man, and the full meaning of his mysterious use of that name becomes clear. Jesus is the definitive way to the peace of the Kingdom because he himself is God who has come to share our human life. *The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28) Jesus gives us the power to transform evil into good - to permanently resolve the condition of sin. *For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave the Son the possession of life in himself. And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man.* (John 5:26-27)

This is who we are as Church. We are the new People of God called to this mission of establishing peace through our witness to the love of God.

Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. But the people cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell to his knees and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:55-59)

Stephen is an example of the power that we have received as missionary disciples of Jesus. It is power to witness confidently to the love of God even when we are misunderstood or rejected. Notice how Stephen is even able to pray in the words of Jesus himself as he was dying on the cross. (Luke 23:34, 46) As we conform ourselves more and more to the example of Jesus, as we witness to the love of God in service of others, we play our own small part in the great work of finally establishing the Kingdom of peace.

Peace Be With You,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Scott Hebden".

Fr. Scott Hebden, Pastor
