

Please Move Ascension Back To Thursday

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May 2021- Louisiana Priest Convention Submission

Christ is our Royal High Priest! Alleluia! He reigns on high. Alleluia! Now is the time to proclaim this more boldly in the Liturgy. Now is the time to move the Ascension back to Thursday, to make the Ascension a true Holy Day of Obligation once again.

The Covid Crisis has filled my heart with a deeper conviction that Jesus reigns as a Royal High Priest. Times of uncertainty cause the Christian soul to seek greater confidence in Jesus as eternal mediator. No other Liturgical Feast Day highlights this more than the Ascension of Our Lord. I have always loved the Ascension, but I long for it now more than ever. The heart can ponder so many aspects of this feast day: dimensions prophetic, royal, and of course priestly. In God's providence, my first homily as a Deacon was on the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord. I remember spending hours preparing (now I am lucky if get 15 minutes); there was so much to say. Our Lord's Ascension "on High" pulls together in a crescendo all the important prophecies of Moses, David, Ezekiel, and Daniel. The liturgical rhythm loses this high note in the current awkward transfer of the celebration to the nearby Sunday.

The baptized faithful long to feel the confidence of Christ's priestly reign. In the current arrangement, however, we lose this along with the beautiful symbology of numbers. 40, 3, 40, 9. 40 days of Lent, 40 Days of the Resurrected Christ still with us, 3 Days of the Central Mysteries of Christ, 9 days awaiting in prayer with Mary in the Upper Room. All these numbers have rich meaning for Christians. They are in many ways, along with 7, the numbers of the Liturgy. They are the numbers of Salvation History.

Sure, this move would create a burden for Moms and Dads; I can hear the objections already. It would, yes, create more work for workers. Yes, Catholics will dread rearranging school, work, and sports on the night before. For parents, household activities can feel like running air traffic control. But tasting Heaven while worshipping Christ makes one forget all that. These concerns melt away in the liturgy. The liturgy is *meant* to rearrange our life. If it doesn't, then the world, the flesh, and the devil will. The Old Testament Jews had to pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year! That is three times a year of figuring out travel arrangements and accommodations, finding sitters for sick or elderly parents, packing luggage, walking on foot.

I believe it is time to make the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord a true Holy Day of Obligation. Let us move the Ascension back to Thursday. Catholics can be divided among so many lines: politics, theology, and liturgy, but I believe we can all agree that highlighting Christ's eternal role as our Priest and King is a good thing. We must remember that the liturgical yoke of Christ is always light.