

## FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



On Thursday we celebrated the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Forty days after Jesus rose from the tomb he ascended into heaven to the right hand of the Father.

The number 40 denotes fullness, plenitude. The people of Israel sojourned 40 years in the desert before entering the Promised Land; Jesus spent 40 days and nights being tempted in the desert after his Baptism. Forty also denotes healing - the word quarantine literally means 40 days; it also signifies maturity - a man begins to be mature at age 40. We speak of 40 as middle age, but that is inaccurate. Our culture thinks that 18 is the age of maturity, which is laughable. Do you remember how you were at 18yrs of age? No, we begin to mature at 40. There is a time of maturity in the forty days the disciples spend with Jesus after his Resurrection, and on the 40<sup>th</sup> day they witness his Ascension into heaven.

Jesus ascends in the flesh, not only in the spirit. He rose from the dead in the flesh - "Look, it's me" he will say, "I'm not a ghost, put your finger in the holes in my hands, put your hand in my side, do you have something to eat?" He rises from the tomb in the flesh, and this same flesh, this body, ascends into heaven. The opening prayer of the Mass says 'His Ascension is our exultation.' Our humanity, our human flesh, has been taken to heaven.

This truth is expressed in the words of the Gospel today: "I have been glorified in them." Jesus speaks of our glorification, our participating in the Glory which he shares with the Father. This Glory is a share in the life of God himself. We do not experience God in the clouds, but in the events of our daily lives and especially in other people. This was brought home to me this past Tuesday evening, when our parish was invited to participate at the Liturgy presided by Cardinal Tobin, and then to a Town Hall meeting in which there was an opportunity to comment, ask questions, and make remarks or suggestions. But before all this happened, the Cardinal met with the priests of the Deanery for over two hours. We ate together and he listened to us. It struck me as an act of humility on his part. The first thing he is doing, having come to our Archdiocese, is to get to know the priests and the people of the parishes. What struck me was his willingness to simply be present, he was here and he listened. He is a man of the people. I felt for him, this was the thirteenth Deanery meeting he has done, with fourteen more remaining! He is doing about two of these meetings every week! It can't be easy for him. I think all this bodes well for the Archdiocese. The Cardinal has great hope and confidence for the future of our Local Church. I think exciting times are ahead for us as Catholic Christians in the Archdiocese of Newark.