

**Homily Outline for the Baccalaureate Mass at
Father McGivney Catholic High School, Glen Carbon, Illinois**

Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord, Year A | May 21, 2023

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- I. “Ascend” is a cherished word in our Catholic faith that refers to the Solemnity of the Ascension of Our Lord that we celebrate today, commemorating the fact that Jesus physically ascended to heaven in His glorified body.
 - A. Unfortunately, the word “ascend” has been co-opted as the name of a cannabis dispensary located here in Illinois and in other states where marijuana has been legalized.
 - B. It is really an impoverished understanding of what it means “to ascend” if it refers to nothing more than getting high on marijuana!
 - C. My friends, as you graduate from Father McGivney Catholic High School today, you are called to ascend to much greater heights than that!
- II. Jesus ascends to His Father in heaven for a very specific purpose: He goes to prepare a place there for us, so that we too can rise to the glory of God’s kingdom.
 - A. The heights to which Jesus calls us are not just in heaven, but here on earth as well.
 - B. Jesus lifts us up from our selfishness and sinfulness to share in the joy of His love here on earth.
 - C. Thus, Jesus promises, “I am with you always, until the end of the age.”
 1. Yes, Jesus is with us in the Church and in the Sacraments, especially in the Holy Eucharist that we share here at Mass.
 2. In the Eucharist, Jesus shares His love with us and asks us to share that love with others.
 3. It is in sharing our love with others that there is no limit to the heights to which we can ascend.

III. St. Thomas Aquinas wrote, "For charity, considered in itself, has no limit to its increase, since it is a participation in the infinite charity which is the Holy Spirit. And in a similar way, the cause of the increase of charity is infinite in its power, for it is God. Furthermore, no limit to this increase can be fixed on the part of the subject: because whenever charity increases, there is a corresponding increase in the ability to receive more. So it is clear that we cannot fix any limits to the increase of charity in this life."¹

A. There is no limit to the heights of love to which God calls us.

1. Think about it: could parents ever say to their children or could children ever say to their parents, "I have reached the limit of my love for you"?
2. I hope not! We can always try to love more!

IV. The final words from Jesus in today's Gospel are very fitting for a commencement celebration: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:16-20).

A. This is called the Great Commission.

B. It does not pertain only to priests and nuns, although it would be great if some of you became priests and religious sisters!

C. This Great Commission is meant for all of us: "Go, and make disciples."

1. You do not have to become a missionary in a remote part of the world to make disciples!
2. The vocation of parents is to make disciples of your children, helping them to get to heaven.
3. Dear graduates, your parents have done this, and you are called to do the same.

D. As you leave Father McGivney Catholic High School, Our Lord's message to you is the same farewell message He gave to His followers two thousand years ago: "Go, and make disciples."

V. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, S. Th. II-II, q. 24, a.7, c.3.