

We have to get behind what one commentary describes as the ‘apocalyptic stage props’ in today’s readings to understand the underlying meaning or movement, or moment, that is going on in Jesus’ Ascension to heaven. The word ‘moment’ is inspired by Paul’s radical description of the Church as so fully present to Christ and to God as to be as Christ and God are ‘filling the whole of creation.’

He has put all things under his feet and made him as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation. (Eph.1: 23)

This seems to undercut any future waiting: this is what you are, as Church, now, in this moment. Of course, the reality seems somewhat different and that, perhaps, was what the waiting in Jerusalem was all about and the forty or fifty days that describe this period or process of waiting. Christ has risen. God and grace are, as ever, fully operative but God and grace are waiting for us to catch up, to enter into that ‘movement of Christ’s self-offering’. We understand it all as sequential, one thing following another, but God is eternal, ever-present, at work always keeping us in being. So we are entering a reality which has always been there, just as Christ, for our sake, does so, leading us, as a human being, in the way of human beings, one step at a time, in a movement towards God which is also a moment or movement that goes on forever. It’s a dynamic felt, rather than understood: a grace, a gift which we have to wait for and to hope for, or else we might be tempted to think it’s of our own doing. No, despite all the words and the promises of salvation, it still comes to us as a surprise. And the call to witness, to go out in the power of the Holy Spirit: this call, to belong and to live in the fullness of Christ, remains a continual surprise. It doesn’t work as we want but works all the same. As Dom Bosschaert said, it’s all about following. So we celebrate a moment, a movement, of waiting and suspense. That I think is its meaning for now.

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