

“So, what are we supposed to do?” That’s the question I feel lingering in the air when I read the passage from Acts that we had as our second reading. Listen again, Jesus said, “[Y]ou will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking up at the sky?’”

There’s a call to action here. Today, on the Feast of the Ascension, we remember the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry and the beginning of the Church’s work of witnessing to Jesus to the ends of the earth. Last week I preached about the basic story of the Gospel, the Kerygma. I used a four-letter acronym CCRR to help us remember the plot of salvation history – and the pivot points of our own relationships with

Jesus. We're Created in God's image and likeness; Captured by Sin, Death, and the Devil; Rescued by Jesus' cross, death and resurrection; and then, fourth, we're called to Respond. I concentrated on Captured and Rescued last week, asking you to prayerfully imagine being abducted by a human trafficker, then rescued by Jesus. This week I want to go back to those Galileans looking up at the sky and consider how we're to respond to Jesus, our Rescuer.

To frame this question, I want to use an analogy from a Stars Wars movie. I hope you remember the scene from "The Empire Strikes Back," towards the end of the film, when Han Solo is about to be dropped into the Carbon-Freeze machine. It's very dramatic. Most of the main characters are gathered at the machine as prisoners. Throughout the movie we've seen the love between of Han and Princess Leia gradually develop. And as Darth Vader signals his minions to take Han and force him into the carbon-freeze, Princess Leia finally tells him, "I love you." And Han's response is . . . "I know."

That's it. "I know." I first saw the film as a freshman in college, and, while I don't claim to have been a suave romantic, even I at the time thought, "Come on Han, you need to do better than that." The situation calls for something more, right? But, my point, Han Solo's response is exactly the response most of us give to the love Jesus shows for us in rescuing us. And I'm talking about the response of us believers. It's -- Jesus: "I love you." Me: "I know."

On the one hand, I suppose it's better than nothing – to acknowledge that we know Jesus loves us so much He died for us. Many don't. And I take that to represent our faith in Jesus. We know who He is and what He's done. And we confess that in front of the world – just as Han received Leia's love in front of all his friends – and Darth Vader. It's not . . . nothing.

But is it really adequate? I think Jesus is waiting and hoping for more of a response from us. Create, captured, rescued, respond. This is what the last R – "respond" is all about. Go back to that moment on the

Mount of Olives, just after the Ascension of Jesus, as the Apostles stood there looking up at the sky. I feel there was a long pause as the Apostles wonder, “What do we do now?” But then the messengers in white (angels?) tell them to get ready. They have a mission to fulfill, to witness to the power of the risen Christ throughout the world.

That’s the adequate response to what Jesus did – and who He is: to somehow tell the world and channel Christ’s grace to it. The Ascension marks the turning point in salvation history, when the Savior has finished His work on earth and has now equipped His Body the Church (once Pentecost and the promised Spirit have come) to go forth as His instruments of grace and love for the world. This is the point of our lives. They’re opportunities for us to respond to Jesus’ love for us.

I don’t know exactly what that response will look like in your case. But I do know what it should feel like. Let’s go back to the scene from “Empire Strikes Back.” Don’t you ever wish you had a Hollywood Scriptwriter to feed you just the right lines at the big moments of your

life. If you could re-write Han Solo's response to Leia, what would you have him say? Seriously. Prayerfully consider what an adequate response would have been to that declaration of love. Then take the spirit and feeling behind whatever heroic, deep, touching, romantic response to Leia you come up with – and make it your life's goal and motivation in so far as how you live out your faith in Jesus. This should be your response to the one who rescued you from the trafficker.

The Ascension marks the occasion for us believers to take the initiative. We've been sent out into the world by God. Looking honestly at our life in its totality, could we say that the way we lead our life is an adequate response to what Jesus did for us, and His confession of love - that it's driven by that heroic love for Him? What do we need to change to make it so? Because if we want to know what an adequate response to being created, captured, rescued might look like – it looks like nothing less than a life that says to Jesus in our own words and actions, "I love you too."