

# Scripture Study

Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord– Cycle A



## Opening prayer

Acts 1:1-11

(Ps 47:2-3,6-9)

Ephesians 1:17-23

**Matthew 28:16-20**

## Overview of the Gospel:

- Like the Gospel of John, the Gospel of Matthew from which we take this reading does not contain an explicit account of Jesus' ascension into heaven. It is included, however, in Mark (16:14:20), with which it bears many similarities, and Luke (24:50-53). In the liturgy today we hear the account from the Acts of the Apostles.
- After his resurrection, Jesus walked the earth and taught his disciples for 40 days (Acts 1:3). Included in these teachings were a promise to be with his Church "until the end of the age [the world]" (verse 13), as well as specific instructions on what they were to be about until that time: *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (verses 19-20).
- Thus Jesus entrusts the Church with his saving mission until he comes again in glory. Next Sunday at Pentecost, we will see that he gives them, not only the authority to carry out this mission (verses 18-19; Matthew 18:18; Luke 10:16; John 20:20-21), but also the power.

## Questions:

- What does the expression "baptized in the Holy Spirit" mean to you (1<sup>st</sup> Reading, verse 5)? Why do you think that being a witness to Jesus' death and Resurrection would require power from the Holy Spirit (verse 8)?
- In the 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading, what does "knowledge" of God mean? How does Paul pray that you will acquire it?
- Upon seeing the resurrected Jesus, how do the disciples respond (verse 17)? Why is doubt mingled with their worship? What do they doubt?
- Of the four actions commanded of the disciples (verses 19-20), which one is central? How are they to make disciples? Of whom? With what resources? Toward what end?
- In what manner is Jesus with the Church always (see last week's study)?
- What is your experience with evangelizing? What is your attitude toward doing it? What do you think God wants you to do with any fears you have? In what ways can you fulfill the "commission" of Jesus in the context of your family? Work? Community?
- How did the reality of Jesus' Resurrection "dawn" upon you? Were you more of a quick believer, or a slow doubter?
- How do you recognize the ongoing presence of Jesus in your life? What do you do to encourage his presence there?

**Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 659-667, 644, 788, 849, 857, 1257**

## Closing Prayer

**Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!**

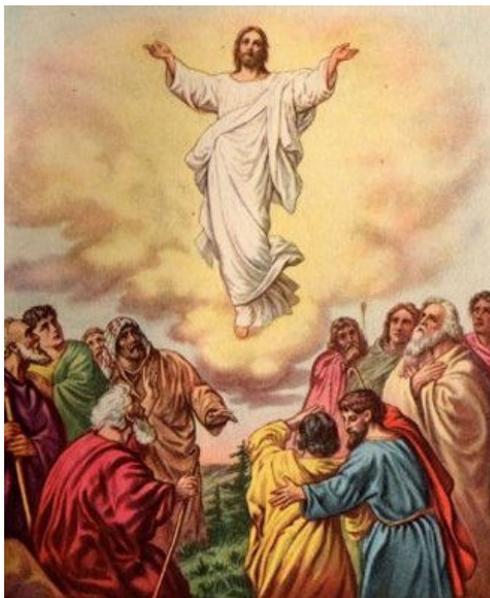
*Those who have a sure hope that they will rise again lay hold of what lies in the future as though it were already present. –St. Cyril of Alexandria*

# "While Jesus blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven"

**Scripture:** Matthew 28:16-20

**Meditation:** Why did Jesus leave his disciples forty days after his resurrection? Forty is a significant number in the scriptures. Moses went to the mountain to seek the face of God for forty days in prayer and fasting. The people of Israel were in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for their entry into the promised land. Elijah fasted for forty days as he journeyed in the wilderness to the mountain of God. For forty days after his resurrection Jesus appeared numerous times to his disciples to assure them that he had risen indeed and to prepare them for the task of carrying on the work which he began during his earthy ministry.

Jesus' departure and ascension into heaven was both an end and a beginning for his disciples. While it was the end of Jesus' physical presence with his beloved disciples, it marked the beginning of Jesus' presence with them in a new way. Jesus promised that he would be with them always to the end of time. He assured them of his power – a power which overcame sin and death. Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Savior, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to give them the power of his Holy Spirit, which we see fulfilled ten days later on



the Feast of Pentecost (Luke 24:49 and Acts 2:1-4). When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left alone or powerless. Jesus assured them of his presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' last words to his apostles point to his saving mission and to their mission to be witnesses of his saving death and his glorious resurrection and to proclaim the good news of salvation to all the world. Their task is to proclaim the gospel – the good news of salvation – not only to the people of Israel, but to all the nations as well. God's love and gift of salvation is not reserved for a few or for one nation alone, but it is for the whole world – for all who will accept it. The gospel is the power of God, the power to

release people from their burden of guilt, sin, and oppression, and the power to heal, restore, and make us whole. Do you believe in the power of the gospel?

This is the great commission which the risen Christ gives to the whole church. All believers have been given a share in this task – to be heralds of the good news and ambassadors for Jesus Christ, the only savior of the world. We have not been left alone in this task, for the risen Lord works in and through us by the power of his Holy Spirit. Today we witness a new Pentecost as the Lord pours out his Holy Spirit upon his people to renew and strengthen the body of Christ and to equip it for effective ministry and mission world-wide. Do you witness to others the joy of the gospel and the hope of the resurrection?

*“Lord Jesus, through the gift of your Holy Spirit, you fill us with an indomitable spirit of praise and joy which no earthly trial can subdue. Fill me with your resurrection joy and help me to live a life of praise and thanksgiving for your glory. May I witness to those around me the joy of the gospel and the reality of your resurrection.”*

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