

Scripture Study

The Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord– Cycle C



Opening prayer

Acts 1:1-11

(Ps 47:2-3,6-8)

Ephesians 1:17-23

Luke 24:46-53

Overview of the Gospel:

- This Sunday is the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.
- In the Gospel reading, Luke gives a summary of what he will more fully relate in Acts 1:1-11, our first reading. The Gospels of Matthew and John do not describe the Ascension; Mark only does so briefly. Only Luke (in Acts) mentions it is 40 days after Jesus' Resurrection, and ten days before the feast of Pentecost, when Jesus will send the fullness of the Holy Spirit upon his Church (Acts 2). It is also the 2nd Glorious Mystery of the Rosary.
- The Ascension is an important part of the work of Jesus for our redemption from sin. It shows that not only was Christ's sacrifice accepted by God the Father (as the Resurrection proves), but, unlike the Old Testament sacrifices, the Ascension is also a visible sign that Christ was a completely acceptable Victim of that sacrifice (verse 51).
- From his throne in heaven (Mark 16:19; Acts 2:32-35), Jesus is now able to send the Holy Spirit (verse 49; John 16:7). He now intercedes for us at the right hand of God (Hebrews 7:24, 9:24), from whence he will come in glory at the end of time.

Questions:

- With what task does Jesus leave his disciples (verse 49)? With what promise? How must they have felt? How much do you think they understood the meaning of his words?
- Why do the disciples act so differently when Jesus is taken from them now (verse 50-53) than when he was taken away by the crucifixion (Matthew 26:56, 74-75)?
- Why is it important to you that Jesus' mission was anticipated beforehand in the Old Testament (Isaiah 50:6, 53:3-10; Hosea 6:1-3, etc)?
- Who are the disciples in your life who encourage your service to Christ?
- How would you live differently if Jesus was not currently reigning in heaven, but was just another noble martyr? In light of your circumstances, where is the mission field Jesus has sent you? Who are some of the people you can witness to in your life? By your words?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 572, 601, 702, 730, 981, 659

Closing Prayer

Every Christian should make Christ present among men. He ought to act in such a way that those who know Him sense 'the aroma of Christ' (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:15). Men should be able to recognize the Master in His disciples. --St Josemaria Escriva

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

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

Scripture: Luke 24:46-53

[alternate reading: *John 16:16-20*]

Jesus said to the Eleven: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high." Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

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 earthly ministry.



Jesus' departure and ascension 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. Now as the glorified and risen Lord and Savior, ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit who would anoint them with power on the Feast of Pentecost, just as Jesus was anointed for his ministry at the River Jordan. When the Lord Jesus departed physically from the apostles, they were not left in sorrow or grief. Instead, they were filled with joy and with great anticipation for the coming 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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