

# THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 24, 2020 A

**Facilitator:** *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

**Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.**

**Opening prayer:** *God our Father, make us joyful in the Ascension of your Son, Jesus Christ. May we follow him into the new creation, for his Ascension is our glory and our hope. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Response to last week's Word:** [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** The first reading describes the Ascension of Jesus and his promise of the Holy Spirit. In the second reading, Paul describes the meaning of the Ascension, how God raised Jesus above all earthly powers and made him Head of the Church and Lord of creation. The Gospel is the Great Commission: Jesus sending his Apostles to preach the Good News to the whole world.

*Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.*

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

## FIRST READING: Acts 1:1-11

In 2 Kings 2:4-15, the prophet Elijah tells his disciple Elisha that he will receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit if he sees Elijah being taken up into heaven. It comes to pass. Elisha witnesses the flaming chariot take up Elijah into heaven in a whirlwind. Thus Elisha receives the spirit of Elijah and proceeds on to Jericho to continue his mission.

In Acts 1:9, the disciples see Jesus being taken up into the clouds, only to return to them in the Spirit in Chapter 2. They are to carry on the mission of Jesus just as Elisha continued the ministry of Elijah.

Jesus' Ascension marks the end of his journey on earth and signals the beginning of a new era. The mission of the Church begins under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM 47

This is a prayer of praise for creation and a liturgical celebration of the enthronement of God.

## SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:17-23

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul provides a theological interpretation of the Ascension. Christ is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, far above every principality, power, virtue, domination, and

every name. Christ's Ascension is the completion of his exaltation. God has placed all things under Christ's feet and exalted him as Head of the Church.

More specifically, the reading is an excerpt from a prayer of thanksgiving. Paul begins by praying that all believers in Jesus will be blessed by wisdom and revelation of his ways. Then Paul prays that believers may be enlightened on three things: 1) hope which is rooted in the possession of the Holy Spirit; 2) inheritance of God's life ("glory") as definitely assured; and 3) tremendous power of God's abiding in believers. Just as God marvelously raised Jesus from death to life in the Resurrection, so too will Christians experience radical change in their own lives. What happened to Jesus will happen to those who believe in him.

## PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20

*As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.*

**A participant reads the Gospel,  
then all pause to reflect.**

*As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.*

## GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20

In contrast to Luke and Acts, Matthew has the Ascension happening on a mountain in Galilee. There he challenges the disciples to take his message to the whole world. “*Make disciples of all nations. They are to baptize people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” Jesus’s last words to his disciples is that he will be ‘with them always until the end of the ages.’ So Jesus is not abandoning them. Rather, he affirms his intimacy with them.

### FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse or image in the readings caught your attention or draws you in. Was there a verse or aspect of the readings that challenged you?

*The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.*

2. After the Ascension, the disciples return to Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. What new or fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit do you desire at this time for your parish and for yourself?

3. Jesus’ last message to his disciples is a commission to evangelize every creature. To what extent is your parish faithful to this Great Commission? How faithful are you? How can both you and your parish carry out more faithfully this commission of Jesus?

4. The Ascension is a time of transition for the Apostles. What has been one of the biggest transitions you have had to go through? What helped you to negotiate the transition?

5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

### RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: This week, be on the lookout for opportunities to share your faith with others.

**JOURNALING.** *Having listened to God’s Word and listened to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

## PRAYING WITH THE WORD

**Facilitator:** Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Jesus just at you commissioned your disciples to share your message with others, you have commissioned me. Help me to be ready and willing to act on your word. Amen.*

### CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

**Facilitator:** Pray for all who are graduating from school at this time. Pray for all who are in transition.

### CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Jesus,*

*Thank you for your promise  
to be with us at all time until  
the end of the world.*

*May your presence help us in our baptismal call  
to make disciples of all nations.*

*Amen.*