

**ASCENSION OF THE LORD**  
**May 16, 2021 B**

**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 Kings 2:4-15, the prophet Elijah told his disciple Elisha that he would receive a double portion of the Holy Spirit if he saw Elijah being taken up into heaven. It came to pass; Elisha witnessed the flaming chariot take up Elijah into heaven in a whirlwind. Thus Elisha received the spirit of Elijah and proceeded 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.

This reading shows us that the Ascension of Jesus 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 and creation of a liturgical celebration of the enthronement of God.

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:17-23**

This 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 he prays that believers may be enlightened on three things: 1) hope which is rooted in the possession of the Holy Spirit; 2) the inheritance of God's life ("glory") as definitely assured; and 3) the tremendous power of God's abiding presence 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**

*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: Mark 16:15-20**

The disciples are given the necessary means of salvation: belief in Jesus and baptism into the Christian community. They are commissioned “to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world” so that all will have a chance to be saved. While many will hear the message, not all will open their hearts to it. Mark names signs that will accompany believers that they will be blessed with empowerment to continue the healing ministry of Jesus. Their *teaching ministry* will be accompanied by a *healing ministry*. The reference to ‘picking up snakes and drinking deadly poison’ is not to be taken literally. It is a Middle Eastern form of hyperbole, a way of saying that followers of Jesus will have his power to overcome all forms of evil. They will possess a power beyond their own to enable them to cope with the hardships of life. For example, many people have been healed by the power of prayer; others have been delivered from the power of Satan; and still others have received the power of God to help them to stop drinking and be freed from the painful memories of a difficult childhood. If Ascension means being lifted up, then we need to believe in the healing power of God to lift us up when we are wounded and possessed by demons of one kind or another. Jesus’ Ascension marks the end of his life on earth and the beginning of the mission of the Church, which all of us participate in by means of our Baptism.

### **FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS**

1. Share with the group or person next to you what spoke to you most in the Gospel. With this first question, try to refrain from commenting on what others said. Just share what spoke to you and then move on to the next person.
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. Jesus’ Ascension is a time of transition for the Apostles. Share a time of transition in your life that turned out to be a blessing.
5. Can you tell a story of when you have been lifted up or have lifted up another?
6. Name 1 thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed/ act on.

### **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, I haven’t been as attentive as I should be to your commission to proclaim the gospel, please renew in me a new vigor, skill and desire to proclaim the Good News of you.

### **RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD**

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestion: Pray for all graduates and people beginning a new chapter in their lives.

### **CONCLUDING PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

**Facilitator:** What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we need to pray? Pray especially for an openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

In preparation for the Feast of Pentecost, consider making a Novena to the Holy Spirit beginning this Friday. A suggested novena is offered at the end of this week's commentary.

### **CLOSING PRAYER (Together)**

#### **I HAVE A MISSION**

God has created me  
To do Him some definite service.  
He has committed some work to me  
Which He has not committed to another.

#### **I HAVE A MISSION**

I may never know it in this life  
But I shall be told it in the next

#### **I AM A LINK IN A CHAIN**

A bond of connection between persons  
He has not created me for naught  
I shall do good - I shall do his work  
I shall be an angel of peace  
A preacher of truth in my own place  
While not intending it  
If I do but keep his commandments  
**THEREFORE I WILL TRUST HIM**

Whatever I am,  
I can never be thrown away.  
If I am in sickness,  
my sickness may serve Him.  
In perplexity,  
my perplexity may serve Him.  
If I am in sorrow,  
my sorrow may serve Him.

#### **HE DOES NOTHING IN VAIN**

He knows what he is about  
He may take away my friends  
He may throw me among strangers  
He may make me feel desolate  
Make my spirits sink  
Hide my future from me—still  
**HE KNOWS WHAT HE IS ABOUT.**

*John Cardinal Newman*

From *Treasury of Prayers* by Father Eamon Tobin

## NOVENA TO THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PREPARATION FOR THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

Before Jesus ascends into Heaven, he tells his disciples to return to Jerusalem and to wait in prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:4-5). For the next nine days, the disciples, along with Mary and some other women, “devoted themselves to constant prayer” (Acts 1:14). This time of prayer is often called the first *Novena* (meaning nine). A *Novena* is a nine-day period of prayer for a particular intention.

Beginning next Friday, you are invited to pray the following Novena to the Holy Spirit for whatever intention you may have. You are encouraged to also pray for our Church family, that we will have a greater sense of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is God’s greatest gift to us. For the next nine days, make a particular effort to be attentive to the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in your daily life and to respond to his promptings.

### NOVENA OUTLINE

#### OPENING PRAYER

Come, Holy Spirit,  
fill the hearts of your faithful  
and enkindle in us the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit  
and we shall be recreated  
and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Pray one decade of the Rosary asking Mary to help you to become more attentive and responsive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Father of Light,  
from whom every good gift comes,  
send your Spirit into our lives.  
With the power of a mighty wind....  
and by the flame of your wisdom,  
open the horizons of our minds.  
Loosen our tongues to sing your praise  
in words beyond the power of speech,  
for without your Spirit  
we could never raise our voices  
in words of peace  
or announce the truth  
that Jesus is Lord! Amen.

**Opening Prayer (Pentecost Sunday)**  
**Scripture Readings for the Nine Days**

**DAY 1**

*Luke 1:35:* Mary conceives Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Luke 3:21-22:* Jesus is baptized with the Holy Spirit.

***“Jesus, baptize me anew with your Holy Spirit.”***

**DAY 2**

*John 7:37-39:* Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit.

***“Come, Holy Spirit, possess my whole being.”***

**DAY 3**

*Acts 2:1-12:* The promised Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples.

***“Holy Spirit, awaken in me the fire of your love.”***

**DAY 4**

*Acts 2:42-47:* Led by the Holy Spirit, the first followers of Christ join together in a small Christian community to share life and God’s deeds in their midst.

***“Holy Spirit, may our Small Christian Community grow in love for you.”***

**DAY 5**

*Acts 10:44-48:* The Holy Spirit is poured out on the Gentiles.

***“Holy Spirit, help me to be open to your workings in the most surprising places and ways.”***

**DAY 6**

*Acts 13:1-12:* Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul and Barnabas are discerned to go on their first missionary journey.

***“Holy Spirit, help me to hear your voice when you call out to me.”***

**DAY 7**

*Rom 8:26-27:* The Holy Spirit helps us in our prayer.

***“Holy Spirit, teach me to pray.”***

**DAY 8**

*1Cor 3:10-16:* The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the deep things of God.

***“Holy Spirit, show me God’s path for my life.”***

**DAY 9**

*Gal 5:16-26:* Paul names some of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. We are holy and Spirit-filled to the extent that the fruits of the Holy Spirit are operative in our lives.

***“Holy Spirit, help me to grow in love, peace, joy.”***