

## Ascension of the Lord

### Reading 1

[Acts 1:1-11](#)

In the first book, Theophilus,  
I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught  
until the day he was taken up,  
after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit  
to the apostles whom he had chosen.  
He presented himself alive to them  
by many proofs after he had suffered,  
appearing to them during forty days  
and speaking about the kingdom of God.  
While meeting with them,  
he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem,  
but to wait for "the promise of the Father  
about which you have heard me speak;  
for John baptized with water,  
but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

When they had gathered together they asked him,  
"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"  
He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons  
that the Father has established by his own authority.  
But you 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 at the sky?  
This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven  
will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."

### Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9](#)

**R. (6) God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

All you peoples, clap your hands,  
shout to God with cries of gladness,  
For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome,  
is the great king over all the earth.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy;  
the LORD, amid trumpet blasts.  
Sing praise to God, sing praise;  
sing praise to our king, sing praise.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

For king of all the earth is God;  
sing hymns of praise.

God reigns over the nations,  
God sits upon his holy throne.

**R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

## **Reading II**

[Eph 1:17-23](#) or [Eph 4:1-13](#) or [4:1-7, 11-13](#)

Eph 1:17-23

Brothers and sisters:

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,  
give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation  
resulting in knowledge of him.

May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened,  
that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call,  
what are the riches of glory  
in his inheritance among the holy ones,  
and what is the surpassing greatness of his power  
for us who believe,

in accord with the exercise of his great might,  
which he worked in Christ,  
raising him from the dead  
and seating him at his right hand in the heavens,  
far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion,  
and every name that is named  
not only in this age but also in the one to come.

And he put all things beneath his feet  
and gave him as head over all things to the church,  
which is his body,  
the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

**or**

Eph 4:1-13

Brothers and sisters,

I, a prisoner for the Lord,  
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the calling  
you have received,  
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,  
bearing with one another through love,

striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit  
through the bond of peace:  
one body and one Spirit,  
as you were also called to the one hope of your calling;  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each of us  
according to the measure of Christ's gift.

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets,  
others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers,  
to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry,  
for building up the body of Christ,  
until we all attain to the unity of faith  
and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature to manhood,  
to the extent of the full stature of Christ.

**or**

Eph 4:1-7, 11-13

Brothers and sisters,  
I, a prisoner for the Lord,  
urge you to live in a manner worthy of the calling  
you have received,  
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,  
bearing with one another through love,  
striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit  
through the bond of peace:  
one body and one Spirit,  
as you were also called to the one hope of your calling;  
one Lord, one faith, one baptism;  
one God and Father of all,  
who is over all and through all and in all.  
And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets,  
others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers,  
to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry,  
for building up the body of Christ,  
until we all attain to the unity of faith  
and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature to manhood,  
to the extent of the full stature of Christ.

## **Gospel**

[Mk 16:15-20](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:  
"Go into the whole world  
and proclaim the gospel to every creature.  
Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved;

whoever does not believe will be condemned.  
These signs will accompany those who believe:  
in my name they will drive out demons,  
they will speak new languages.  
They will pick up serpents with their hands,  
and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them.  
They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."

So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them,  
was taken up into heaven  
and took his seat at the right hand of God.  
But they went forth and preached everywhere,  
while the Lord worked with them  
and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

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## HOMILY

Today we celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord. This feast commemorates the exaltation of Christ in to heaven in the presence of his disciples, after his glorious resurrection. The Ascension of Jesus into heaven completed his earthly ministry for our redemption.

The 'Longer Ending' of St Mark's Gospel records three encounters with the Risen Christ. Firstly there is an encounter with Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. She carries this news to those disciples who mourn and weep, but they fail to believe her. The next encounter is experienced by two disciples as they walk into the country, but once again the other disciples do not believe. The third encounter is with the Eleven, and here the Lord upbraids them for refusing to believe those who saw him after he had risen.

Thus we find in St Mark a threefold revelation of the Resurrection before a commissioning to ministry, followed by the Ascension of the Lord to sit at the right hand of the Father.

This revelation has happened in stages: first to one person, then to two, and finally to the whole company of the Eleven. These were the three moments of the ministry of the Risen Lord, as he reveals that in his shattering of death he has been glorified in soul and in body, and thus he is physically and bodily present to them.

St Thomas Aquinas points to two clear objectives of this ministry: to show the truth of the Resurrection and to manifest the glory of the Risen Lord. He appeared to them only sporadically; he did not return to living the same common life as before, since it was not the same kind of life to which he rose. He rises to a life of glory, and in these final acts of his personal ministry he shows forth that bodily glory.

This final act of revelation accomplished, the disciples are sent forth to preach this good news to the whole of creation. His personal earthly ministry has finished: this ministry now becomes the expression of the Church, His Body, to all the ends of the earth. The final act of his glorification is his being taken up into Heaven.

St Thomas asserts that it was Christ as man that ascended into Heaven. As God, there was nowhere to which he can or need ascend. It is his whole humanity, body and soul, that are glorified at the Ascension. His crucified and risen body shines with greater glory than any other body. It ranks highest in dignity. Here he takes his place, not only above all bodies, but above all spiritual creatures also:

*God set him above all Principality, and Power, and Virtue, and Dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come (Eph 1:21).*

His Ascension prepares the way for our ascension, and it awakens us in faith, hope, charity and reverence.

It is only when he has ascended that the proclamation of the Gospel can commence. In his Ascension, the full truth of the Resurrection is shown forth. The glory of the Ascension prepares the way for the descent of the Holy Spirit, breathing living fire into the disciples. These men who have spent the previous forty days in fear and dread will soon spread out across the world, driven

even to die for the mission entrusted to them. The Holy Spirit, he who is also called Lord, dwells in their hearts; and His presence is seen in their words, deeds and gatherings. He authenticates their work: 'the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it' (Mark 16:20).

We rejoice at Jesus' Ascension, because his return to the Father establishes a new bond between heaven and earth. In sending the Spirit, Jesus fulfils his promise to remain with us always. We become his physical presence in the world, his body alive with his love. If he is with us in the Spirit, where can we be except with him in the same Spirit?

Our lives have been configured to this great paschal mystery of Jesus, to his death, resurrection, exaltation, and sending of the Spirit. Through baptism we enter sacramentally into the tomb with Jesus so that we may also rise with him as members of his body. Through confirmation we enter sacramentally into his promotion to the right hand of the Father to become temples of his Spirit and witnesses of his grace to the ends of the earth. Through the Eucharist we partake sacramentally in the divine meal and share in God's gladness.

It is our human nature which Christ shares and it is that same nature that is glorified at the Ascension. We are intimately connected to Christ and thus share in his glory. The completeness of this promised glory we do not yet know. But the Spirit of him breathes flames of life into our hearts and our souls that we may live now in joy, and share his message with all whom we meet in love and truth. We walk together in faith, hope and charity. We have seen the splendor of our Lord and Savior: risen, ascended, glorified. May his glory continue to shine in our lives and in the world, amen.

***Rev. Anatole Tiendrebeogo***