

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Men of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens?
This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven
will return as you saw him go, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Gladden us with holy joys, almighty God,
and make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving,
for the Ascension of Christ your Son
is our exaltation,
and, where the Head has gone before in glory,
the Body is called to follow in hope.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ac 1:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.
In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.
He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about; John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.' Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem, but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.' As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the

sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

RESP. PSALM

Psalm 46

Response:

God goes up with shouts of joy;
the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.
or
Alleluia!

1. All peoples, clap your hands,
cry to God with shouts of joy!
For the Lord, the Most High, we must fear,
great king over all the earth. (R.)
2. God goes up with shouts of joy;
the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.
Sing praise for God, sing praise,
sing praise to our king, sing praise. (R.)
3. God is king of all the earth.
Sing praise with all your skill.
God is king over the nations;
God reigns on his holy throne. (R.)

SECOND READING

Ep 1:17-23

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what it revealed to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Go, make disciples of all the nations;
I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 28:16-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you.
And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins

and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We offer sacrifice now in supplication, O Lord,
to honour the wondrous Ascension of your Son:
grant, we pray,
that through this most holy exchange
we, too, may rise up to the heavenly realms.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty ever-living God,
who allow those on earth to celebrate divine mysteries,
grant, we pray,
that Christian hope may draw us onward
to where our nature is united with you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

We return to Galilee, where Jesus' public ministry began and where his ministry will end. Or will it?

Matthew's account of the end of Jesus' earthly story does not mention his departure: the conclusion is rather his commissioning of the eleven remaining disciples to continue his work. As the glorified son of Man he has received (which means that God has given him) all authority in heaven and on earth, and by virtue of this he is sending out the disciples to make disciples among the Gentile nations: the gospel is not just for the Jewish people. They are to baptise them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to observe everything that Jesus has commanded. Galilee is now the gateway to the non-Jewish world and the gospel is directed outwards. The mountain is symbolic as a place of revelation and emphasises the solemnity of the occasion. The disciples acknowledge Jesus' divine status by falling down before him in worship. Why some hesitate is a matter of conjecture, but often in appearance stories there is an element of the person not recognising Jesus straightaway.

The final promise brings back the name which was given by the angel to Joseph at the beginning of the narrative. Jesus was to be called Emmanuel, a name which means God-is-with-us. This name does not feature in the Gospel after that, Jesus is never referred to in that way, but it underlies the statement I-am-with-you, and rounds off Matthew's book with a nice literary flourish. Jesus will be present with his disciples, not just the Eleven here, but all his disciples down through the ages, yes, to the end of time. How this will happen, Jesus does not explain: we simply have to take him at his word.

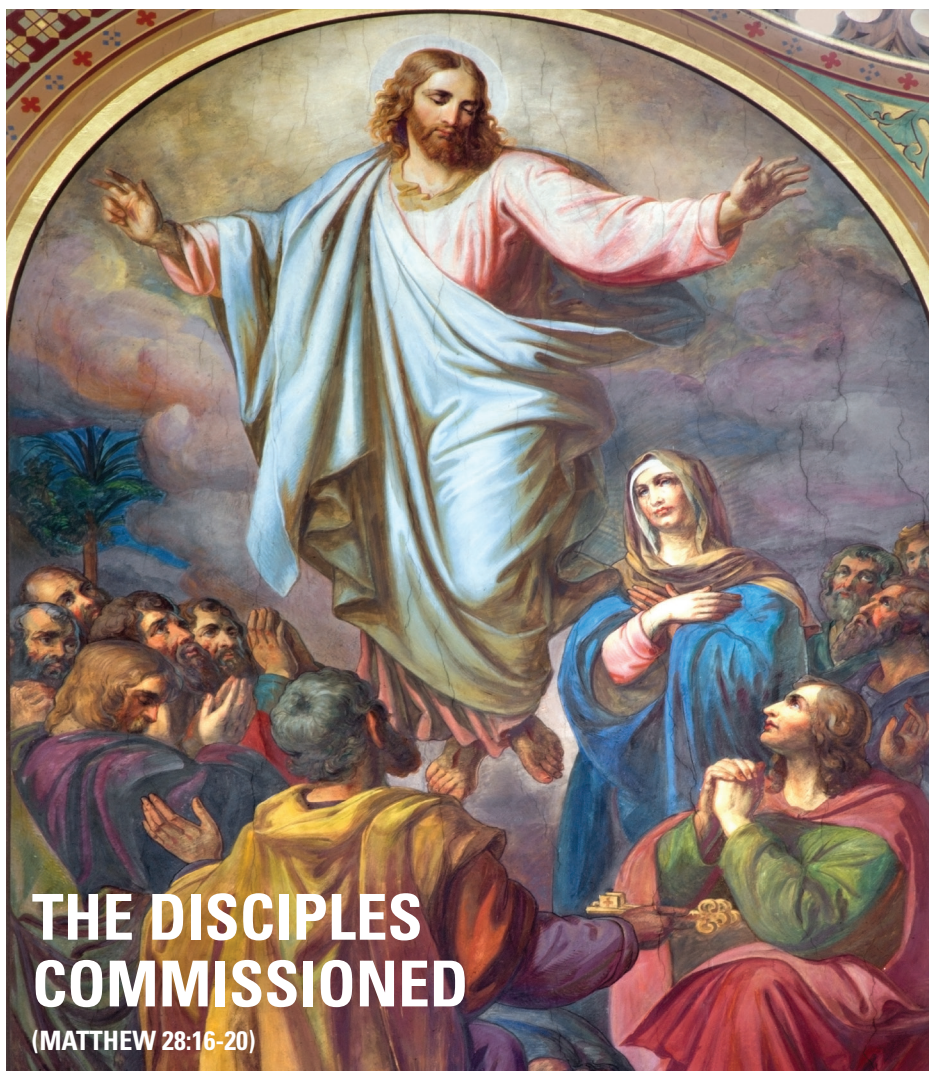
This is the final, the climactic experience which the disciples have of the risen Jesus. Its purpose is to inaugurate the mission of the Church. The preaching of the Good News is to continue, and those who accept it will declare this publicly by accepting baptism. Jesus will be with us in spirit, and that is the note of hope and confidence on which Matthew ends his Gospel. ■

SAY

I am with you always; yes, to the end of time (Matthew 28:20).

DO

Make the sign of the Cross with holy water and renew your baptismal commitment to the Lord.



THE DISCIPLES COMMISSIONED

(MATTHEW 28:16-20)

REFLECT

Although we call today's feast The Ascension, there is no heavenward departure of Jesus. Rather, we have the sending of the disciples on mission along with Jesus' continued presence. The ascension as an event is only recorded by Luke in Acts, and its purpose there is really to emphasise the glorified state of the risen Christ: the Jesus who was laid in the tomb is

now risen to a new kind of existence with God. Even there, the ascension is linked to the coming of the Spirit. We can be led into thinking that Jesus has left us to return at some future date, but that would be to ignore the emphasis on his being Emmanuel, God-with-us, a teaching that applies not only to the meaning of his birth, but also to the true significance of his resurrection. ■

LEARN

The Trinitarian baptismal formula in the name of the Father ... reflects Church practice later than the time of Jesus.

Jesus' helping presence to the disciples is Matthew's equivalent of the Holy Spirit.

The title Christ is properly applied to the risen Jesus: it is not a surname.