

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

Acts 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 to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father 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.

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

Ephesians 4:1-13

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

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it. It was said that he would:

When he ascended to the height, he captured prisoners, he gave gifts to men.

When it says, 'he ascended', what can it mean if not that he descended right down to the lower regions of the earth?

The one who rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things is none other than the one who descended. And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ. In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

The word of the Lord.

Alternative Second Reading

Ephesians 1:17-23

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

GOSPEL

Mark 16:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark.

Jesus showed himself to the Eleven, and said to them, "Go out to the whole world;

proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover."

And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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,**

(all bow during the next three lines)

**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.**

13 MAY 2018

Sunday Message

THE ASCENSION OF JESUS

THE WORD

Year B • Season Colour: White • Psalter Week 3



The Gospel of Mark proper actually ends with the statement that (the women) “went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them: and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

Not the most satisfactory ending to the story of the Good News, you might think. Clearly other people were of that opinion and added details from other parts of the tradition, probably sometime in the second century. They included an appearance of the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene and

an episode resembling the experience of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Today’s Gospel reading comprises the last few verses of this addition to Mark’s authentic text.

Like the ending of Matthew’s account, Jesus commissions the eleven remaining disciples to go out and preach the Gospel to all people. After this, Jesus was taken up into heaven and enthroned in glory at God’s right hand, while the disciples set out to fulfil his commands. The ascension is the narrative and visual way of expressing the belief that Jesus now exists in a different

way to that by which the disciples knew him in his ministry. The apostle Paul talks about God highly exalting Jesus because of his obedience and commitment to his mission: the evangelists decided to express their understanding of Jesus in story form and so have to depict this aspect as an event.

What we might ponder from this reading is that the last words of Jesus to his disciples contain a missionary charge. But the ascension is not the end of the Paschal Mystery or event: Pentecost is yet to come, the Easter story is not yet over. ■

REFLECT

For people of today, the ascension raises several obvious questions, such as: where did Jesus go? And where is Jesus now? If we say, following the texts of the Gospels, that Jesus is in *heaven*, what we really mean is that Jesus is in the presence of God. This, taken with the teaching about the Second Coming at the end of time, suggests that Jesus is absent as far as we are concerned. The Gospel text which says that Jesus’ disciples will fast when the bridegroom is taken away from them has at times been applied to the ascension and used to justify severe penitential practices in certain religious orders.

If we take the wider Gospel tradition, we find that the ascension of Jesus is connected to the sending of the Holy Spirit and we are encouraged in the days between Ascension and Pentecost to pray for the renewal of the Church by the Spirit. The disciples have been commissioned to spread the Gospel, but they do not have to rely on their own efforts alone. The Spirit will be the driving force behind their efforts. That they are succeeding will be shown by people being baptised, expressing outwardly that they have accepted inwardly the preaching of the word and are willing to accept it. We may ourselves not be called to bear witness in such a direct manner, but as disciples of Jesus we are commissioned to bear witness to the faith into which we were once baptised and to which we assented once more at Easter. ■

LEARN

There are two aspects to the resurrection of Jesus: the idea of return to life, and that this life is of a different and glorified order to the one the disciples experienced during his ministry.

The Empty Tomb stories express the return to life: this emphasises that the same Jesus who was crucified and buried is the one who is risen.

The appearance and ascension scenes tell us that Jesus is not simply resuscitated to bodily life but has been transformed and now enjoys a different kind of existence.

With the ascension, the appearances of Jesus come to an end: no further public revelation is to be expected.

DO

When you find yourself in a lift, on an escalator or just going upstairs, think of Jesus ascending to the presence of God. You are Jesus’ disciple: how are you fulfilling his command to bear witness to the Gospel?

SAY

The ascension of Christ is our glory and our hope.