

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

**Glorify 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.

PSALM

Ps 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 is 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,**

(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.**

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE!

(MATTHEW 28:16-20)

The Gospel passage for today is the final paragraph of Matthew's version of the Good News. The eleven remaining disciples have returned to Galilee as instructed by the message given to the women by the angel at the tomb and by the risen Jesus himself.

This is the final appearance of Jesus in which he reveals himself in his glorified state to his followers. But there is no goodbye: rather, with the authority now granted him, he commissions his disciples to continue his mission throughout the world. The Gospel ends with an echo of the angel's message in the dream to Joseph: "They will call him Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'"; this is fulfilled in the promise of the risen Jesus, "Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." Thus the Gospel ends, not with the departure of Jesus, but with the promise of his continuing presence. ■

LEARN

The Ascension is the last of the appearances of the Risen Jesus to his disciples.

The appearances express the glorified existence of the Risen Jesus, not now confined by time and space.

Jesus' promise to be with his disciples is the fulfilment of the symbolic name *Immanuel* given to him at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel account.



Tiled mosaic of the Ascension in All Saints Church, London, designed by Butterfield and painted by Alexander Gibbs

DO

Look up at the sky. Think of the words of the angels to the disciples, "Why are you standing here looking into the sky?" Where do you imagine Jesus to be today?



SAY

**I am with you always,
yes, to the end of time**

(Matthew 28:20)

REFERENCE: Erik Varden, *The Tablet*, May 25, 2020, 6-7.

REFLECT

The title for today's reflection comes from an article by the abbot of an English Cistercian monastery in which he considers how the journey of the first astronauts to the moon changed our understanding of the Ascension of Jesus. Once human beings had travelled into space, the idea of Jesus literally going up beyond the clouds became even more difficult to sustain than perhaps it had been before.

This year, the Gospel passage from Matthew does not relate the dramatic departure of Jesus as does Luke. But we might note that Luke gives us two distinct accounts of the same event: at the end of the Gospel, on the evening of Easter day, Jesus took the disciples to the outskirts of Bethany, blessed them, withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. According to the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, composed by the same writer, 40 days later Jesus was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. This gives us a clue that Luke wants us to understand

the Ascension not so much as a literal historical event, but as emphasising Jesus' altered state by virtue of the Paschal (or Easter) Mystery. The cloud in the Bible is often a symbol of the divine presence, so the theme being presented is that Jesus is now living in the presence of the Lord.

Abbot Erik comments that the (lunar) mission was a scientific triumph, but for our theological imagination, it was a disaster. But was it? All Gospel stories are to some degree symbolic: the author wants us to penetrate beyond the literal meaning and see the deeper implications for our own lives as well as telling us something about the person of Jesus. If the exploration of space has made us rethink the meaning of the Ascension of Jesus, then it has done us a positive service. Perhaps we need to think more about Matthew's ending and the continuing presence of Jesus with us in our world than imagining that Jesus has left us and gone elsewhere: he is God-with-us, here and now! ■