

**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.

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**

Eph 4:1-13

(For shorter form, read between > <)

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

>1, 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.<

Thanks be to God.

Alternative second reading

Eph 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**

Mk 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.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in God,  
the Father almighty,  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died and was buried;  
he descended into hell;  
on the third day he rose again from the dead;  
he ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;  
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and life everlasting.  
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.

## JUST AN EMPTY TOMB?

(MARK 16:15-20)

The original Gospel of Mark ends very abruptly: the women visit the tomb of Jesus on Easter morning, find it empty, encounter a young man (angel) who informs them that Jesus is risen and they are to tell the disciples to go to Galilee, where they will encounter him; the terrified women run away from the tomb “and they said nothing to a soul, for they were afraid...”

Hardly an appropriate ending for a book which opens with the phrase, “The Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”? So a certain scribe seems to have thought at some point in the second century and added a collection of material from other sources, thus bringing Mark’s version into line with the mainstream Gospel tradition. Matthew’s version ends with Jesus revealing himself to the 11 remaining disciples in Galilee in much the same way as related in our reading, but without any mention of his ascension, whereas Luke relates this event in two dramatic accounts, one at the end of his gospel story, the other at the beginning of his book of Acts of the Apostles, both located in or near Jerusalem.

The Ascension is the other side of the Easter mystery to the empty tomb: the latter tells us that the body of Jesus, which the women observed being placed in the tomb, is no longer there but cannot give a reason for its absence; the appearances of the risen Jesus, including the Ascension, tell us that he is the same person whom the disciples knew before the crucifixion, but now existing in a different, transformed way. Without this second factor, Jesus’ resurrection could be understood as a resuscitation or even, as some people have suggested, that he did not really die on the cross at all. ■

## REFLECT

One of the unfortunate characteristics of biblical narrative is that so many of the women who feature in the stories remain anonymous. In our gospel reading today, for example, the four male disciple companions of Jesus are identified by name, but we have no such complementary detail about Peter’s mother-in-law. Mark tells us that when she rose from her sick-bed, she began “to wait on them”: this is the verb usually translated as ‘to serve’, and the only human beings who are mentioned as ‘serving’ in the Gospel tradition are women. Jesus uses the term in his teaching on leadership, that among the disciples the leader is one who ‘serves’, not one who rules or dominates. Another point we might notice is that the verb in question comes from the same root as the noun which gives us the English word ‘deacon’.

We later find that the women are the link witness element in the crucial events of Jesus’ death, burial and the events at the tomb of Jesus on Easter morning, after the male disciples had abandoned him in Gethsemane.

In any discussion about the ministry of women in the Church, we might take the New Testament evidence into account, especially Paul’s remark that through baptism, there is now “no longer male nor female” in Christ (Gal 3:28). We also should distinguish those customs which belong to historical and cultural systems or prejudice and which have little to do with the revealed Word of God. ■

## LEARN

Our gospel reading today comes from what is known as the ‘Markan Appendix’: this section did not form part of the original text.

Apart from this reference, Luke is the only evangelist who describes the Ascension as a distinct event.

Jesus is still *Emmanuel*, ‘God-with-us’, as he tells the disciples (and ourselves) at the end of Matthew’s account.

## DO

When you are out and about, notice the escalator or lift in the shopping centre or some such place. Think of the Ascension of Jesus as a way of expressing our belief in the Resurrection, not as a final departure.



## SAY

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