

7th SUNDAY OF EASTER / THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD - YEAR A/B/C

World Communication Day

“Preserving human voices and faces” is the theme for the 60th World Day of Social Communication, which will be celebrated on 17 May 2026, the Sunday before Pentecost.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Acts 1:1-11 - "As they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight"

Ephesians 1:17-23 - "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named”

Matthew 28:16-20 (Year A) - "Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”

Or Mark 16:15-20 (Year B) Or Luke 24:46-53 (Year C)

INTRODUCTION

Hello my brothers and sisters in Christ, welcome to today’s celebration of the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord Jesus. As we celebrate this great Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, all of us are reminded that forty days have passed in this joyful and glorious season of Easter. Jesus ascended into Heaven forty days after His Resurrection. This solemnity celebration is truly significant. The message of Jesus' Ascension is clear - we have a Savior who loves us, who saved us, who rose, ascended into heaven, and is glorified, sitting at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us and sent the Holy Spirit to work in us. Let us pray today to continue our journey of faith and hope that we may share in the same glory one day in heaven. May the Lord, ascended in glory onto His Throne in Heaven, most excellent and almighty, continue to guide us all His Church and all of us His beloved ones, in our path and way of daily life.

HOMILY

(Extracted and edited, meditated and added by Fr.Hrudaya Gade)

Theme: "While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem..."(Lk 24:50-53)

Point of Focus: The Ascension - The parting Gift (Blessing) of Jesus to His Disciples

Social Media Message

Today we commemorate the Solemnity of the Lord’s Ascension into Heaven. I once received an interesting social media message about the Ascension: "*Ascension Day is the day when Jesus started to work from Home!*" It is, of course, a funny message, but also, it makes some sense about what Ascension is. Indeed, Ascension Day was a pivotal moment for Jesus as He transitioned from earth to Heaven. But, that’s not all. The Ascension of Jesus holds deeper significance.

The Ascension of the Lord

The Ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father 40 days after His Resurrection, is recorded by Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:2; and is referenced in John 6:63; John 20:17; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 4:8-10; Colossians 3:3; 1 Timothy 3:16; and 1 Peter 3:22. On the Mount of Olives, just outside the city of Jerusalem, stands the Chapel of the Ascension. This small, historic building pinpoints the highly probable site of Jesus’ ascension into Heaven. Pilgrims have been visiting this site since the early centuries of Christianity. The Church continues to believe and profess it in the Creed: "*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"(Nicene Creed). This declaration of faith provides the church's comprehensive teaching about the Ascension of Jesus.

The Ascension scene signifies the magnificent and joyful culmination of Jesus' earthly life and it fills us with a remarkable sense of triumph and hope! Often, we come across Shakespearean dramas of love that tragically end with death and devastation. However, God has scripted the greatest love story of all, one that portrays love as divine and holy love, as radical love, as love that "endures all things" and as "love never ends" (1 Cor 13: 7-8). Today, we sing and rejoice along with the Psalmist: *"God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm. God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne"*(Ps 47:5-8).

What the celebration of the Ascension of Jesus is all about?

As recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: "As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). The Hebrew word for the phrase "to lift up" is 'nasa' (sounds familiar?). It is a verb appearing roughly 600 times in the Old Testament, meaning to lift, raise, or take away, and it refers often to the royal enthronement. "Lift up your hearts" (Lam 3:41; Ps 25:1; Ps 86:4) is the invitation to the Eucharistic prayer encouraging congregants to move from worldly distractions to a mindset of praise.

Now, the question is - what the celebration of the Ascension of Jesus is all about? The Ascension of Jesus celebrates the completion of Jesus' mission on earth and His exaltation and glorification in heaven. This signals that His saving work was done successfully. Christ's Ascension marks the enthronement and honor to the Son of God, validating his dominion over all things and revealing His Kingship and His power to judge the world. By His Ascension, the Risen Christ, True God and True Man, is now One with the Father and the Holy Spirit in glory forever. It is there, at the right hand of God, that Jesus continues to make intercession for all of us with the Father. It is there, at the right hand of God, that Jesus continues to reign in the kingdom of God. Ascension is a culmination, but not the conclusion. Jesus' Ascension does not indicate His physical absence on the earth; rather, it initiates His presence in a different form, through the Holy Spirit who is with us until the end of time. It means, from now on He will guide the ongoing plan of salvation through the Spirit, unrestricted by time, space, or culture. Thus, today's solemnity calls us to look up the Lord being "seated at God's right hand in heaven" and hope to share the same exaltation and glory with him one day.

The Ascension of the Lord: What else it Involves?

Firstly, the Ascension of Jesus is the grand triumph and glorification of all his works for our salvation (Ps 47:8; Eph 1:20-22, Col 3:1).

Secondly, through His Ascension, Christ is rightly recognized and highly honored as equal with a place at the right hand of the Father.

Thirdly, the Ascension continues Jesus' Priestly work for us where Christ, "the high priest who has passed through the heavens" (Heb 4:14).

Fourthly, the Ascension is a sign of hope and assurance of the eternal life and Jesus has gone to prepare a place for everyone who are pilgrims on this earth (Jn 14:2-3).

Fifthly, the Ascension of the Lord does not mean the end of Jesus' era on earth but the beginning of a new era of Christ to guide us through the Holy Spirit towards the same heaven where He has ascended.

Sixthly, the Ascension points directly to Pentecost, the event of the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the birth of the Church. The Church began to grow from then on.

Lastly, the Ascension is about passing His mission of salvation to His disciples to proclaim the good news to all the nations(Lk 24:47). His mission, now, is also ours, to transform and uplift the world.

Praxis - Activating Ascension Mindset

My dear friends, in my observation, the Ascension might be an article of faith that we often ignore to contemplate enough. I wonder why we tend to neglect that faith aspect of the Ascension. Maybe we feel a bit embarrassed about a story that sounds like Superman taking off into the sky...In truth, the Lord's Ascension is not just an historical event of the church—it's a message that remains relevant for us today. St Augustine tells us that the reality of the Ascension is directly related to how we experience the kingdom of God in our lives, "for just as Christ remained with us even after his ascension, so we too are already in heaven with him, even though what is promised us hasn't yet been fulfilled in our bodies".

The Ascension is rich with both theological depth and practical inspiration for our daily lives. Your faith and mindset is a crucial factor in determining the outcomes of your life. It plays a significant role in whether you succeed or fail. The ascension mindset focuses on achieving success, accomplishing goals, and striving for excellence. It is the key to reaching great heights in life. The stronger your mindset, the higher you can soar. Jesus Christ embodied the ascension mindset even before it occurred. He spoke it into existence, declaring, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God" (Jn 20:17b). To put it in direct and concise terms, "Jesus, by His incarnation, changed our human nature into divine nature; Jesus, by His resurrection, transformed our perishable nature into imperishable nature; Jesus, by His ascension, changed our temporal state of life into perpetual state; Marvelously, even now, through the reception of the Eucharist, Jesus works in us all those metamorphoses, changing our human condition of mortality to immortality"(Fr.Gade).

The Ascension is about building up the Body of Christ on earth, about our own ascension to that reality. As one scripture scholar puts it: "Ascension and Pentecost are feasts of Christian maturity". The ascension focuses on maturing in our relationship (faith) with Christ. St. Paul urged the Colossians to set their minds on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Col 3:1). He also advised the Romans to renew their minds in order to discern God's will, which is good, pleasing and perfect (Rom 12:2). So, we cannot ascend to God's glory while living a descended (low) life. As members of the Body of Christ, we all receive blessings from the Lord's ascension. That's why, as followers of Jesus Christ's ascension, we are called to rise up above our earthly concerns and strive towards heavenly goals.

Reflect - What good do you want to leave behind before you leave the world?

Personal attention to keep the spirit of Ascension alive by overcoming our barriers to connect with each other is the need of the day for the present world. In his Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (May 24, 2015), Pope Francis insists on listening to the "cry of the

earth and the cry of the poor” because the environmental, social, and economic crises are inseparable. What we need, he says, is “a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature”(#178). The Pope offers a vision of an interrelated world in which, “All is connected”. The Pope calls for fraternity and solidarity that transcends national, racial, and economic barriers to build a more just and sustainable future. Pope Francis asks us, “What type of world do we wish to leave behind for those who will come after us, to the kids who are growing up?” And he invites us to an urgent need of responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor who could wait no longer.

Pray

A great blessing we all have is the Eucharist to bring us together as we gather around the Lord's Table. Christ's loving presence in the Sacraments and sacramentals help us to gain a deeper union with others in many ways. Today, on the feast of the Ascension, it's a good time to reflect on what holds us back, what disconnects us and disunites us with one another. Someone once said that ‘angels can fly not so much because they have wings, but more so because they carry no burdens.’ What are the weights that drag you down? What extra baggage is preventing you from your ability to rise?

Let us take a moment today to pray to the Risen Lord and ascended Christ, asking Him to direct our gaze towards heaven and to free us from sin and unnecessary attachments, enabling us to be lifted up, body and soul, into heaven.

Ascension Day Prayer

O God of earth and sky, as Jesus came among us in Bethlehem to raise us up to heaven, so today we recall his departing from us at Jerusalem to be in all places.

Though he is hidden from our sight, enable us to abide in him by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, until his mercy and grace fill your whole creation. Amen.

(Source: The Daily Office: A Book of Hours for Daily Prayer; Volume Three: The Great Fifty Days)