

The Ascension of the Lord - Lectionary: 58

Reading 1 [ACTS 1:1-11](#)

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for “the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” When they had gathered together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

Responsorial Psalm [PS 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9](#) - R. (6) God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

Reading 2 [EPH 1:17-23](#)

Brothers and sisters: May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a Spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Gospel [MT 28:16-20](#)

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

We don't think enough about the Ascension. Yet, it is a crucial part of Christ's mission and message. It is the culminating moment of his victory. Jesus ascends into heaven as the living sacrifice that will continue to be the bridge between God and humanity until the end of time. There, our Lord speaks on our behalf to the Father for all eternity, interceding for us.

This great event of the Ascension is, above all the celebrations of the liturgical year, the great feast of hope. His Ascension is a bridge between heaven and earth. We are not abandoned! If we repent always and believe what we have heard and do what he has told us, then we are guaranteed a room in the Father's house. We have freedom and, by the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Those who die in Christ's friendship will not melt back into nothingness.

He calls upon his apostles be witnesses, giving testimony. They will not be able to carry out their witness all by themselves, they will need the Holy Spirit, and so he promises that at Pentecost they will be "clothed with power from on high." But then they are to go to "all the nations". First, they will have to wait while Jesus and the Father prepare to send the Holy Spirit, and his saving work goes into high gear, as attested to by the Acts of the Apostles. There, through the baptismal outpouring of the Holy Spirit on them, they will begin to understand and grow in understanding. They will all aggressively engage in the work they have been given, as they continue His mission. Jesus gave us a very important mission. To continue his loving and redemptive presence in the world.

Like Jesus who set his face to Jerusalem, we must joyfully set ourselves firmly to the task He has given. Like the apostles, disciples, all the saints before us, we must let the Holy Spirit nourish our minds and strengthen us in the face of the trials and temptations - this is the virtue of hope in action. Hope moves us forward even when we are wounded, tired, or surrounded by opposition. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered on our behalf as forerunner, becoming high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 6:19-20

So, in the Ascension of our Lord, we come face to face with the core of the entire Gospel: Christ's saving message being transmitted to all people through the witness of the Church.

As members of the Church, we are the members of his mystical body. We continue in our own lives the work that Jesus did in his earthly life: spreading the Good News of God's mercy and salvation, healing those around us by loving our neighbors as ourselves and offering our own sufferings to God in union with Christ's sufferings.

We need the whole Trinity's help in fulfilling our mission, to help Our Lord in Heaven to continue his saving work on earth. Despite how we might feel at times. No matter what discouragements we experience. We have hope. Because he has ascended into heaven, beyond the limits of time and space, beyond the reach of death and evil, we are able to exercise the virtue of hope.

In this way, the salvation that Jesus won for the world is gradually being spread throughout the world - through us. This is why Jesus said, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age." He invites us to be his partners in the business of salvation. Instead of directing all of our efforts immediately, as if we were his puppets, he guides us through his Church. There we are sure to find grace in the sacraments and truth of Christ's teaching.

The two men dressed in white in today's First Reading are asking us the same thing today that they asked the Apostles, "why are you standing there?" We must remember that, in faith, we know the floodgate of grace is open and we are being soaked in it. He's given us the sacraments, the Scriptures, and the help of the Church. We have plenty of grace to get to work.

So, let's pray as St Paul did in the Second Reading, that the: "eyes of our hearts be enlightened, that we may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory... and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe".