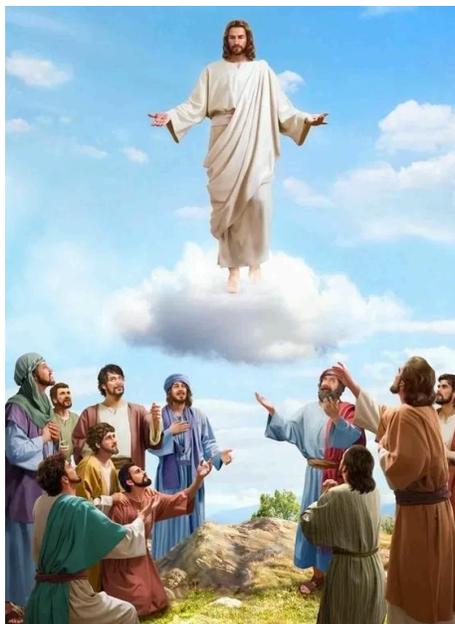


Lectio Divina of the Ascension Sunday- 2021

Jesus Ascended into Heaven and is Seated at the Right hand of the Father



Opening Prayer: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. God our Heavenly Father, we praise and bless you for this evening to reflect on the Ascension of our Lord Jesus who came among us in Bethlehem to raise us up to heaven. As we recall his departing from Jerusalem to be in all places, enable us to abide in him by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. Grant that his triumphs and glories may ever shine in our eyes to make us see more clearly through his sufferings, and more courageously endure our own; being assured by his example, that if we endeavor to live and die like him, for the cause of your love in ourselves and others, you will raise our dead bodies again, and conforming them to his glorious body, call us above the clouds, and give us possession of your everlasting kingdom. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen

First Reading: A Reading from book of the Acts of the Apostles 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.”

The Word of God / Thanks be to God

Commentary: The first reading gives an account of Jesus’ ascension. We find in these 11 verses a bridge between the events recorded in the gospels and the events connecting the beginning of the church. The Physical Jesus spent 3 years with his disciples training them to take up the legacy of Jesus’ kingdom mission. And after his resurrection, the glorified Jesus spent 40 days teaching his disciples to continue his mission after they receive the holy spirit. And for that glorious moment, First, He instructs his apostles to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the baptism by the Holy Spirit so that they might become his “witnesses to the ends of the earth” by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then a cloud took Jesus from the sight of the disciples and two heavenly messengers in white garments gave them the assurance of Jesus’ return in glory. The ascension of Jesus is the beginning of his exaltation and the end of his earthly existence, as a prelude to the gift of the Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm: *God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.*

All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness,
For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome, is the great king over all the earth.
God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy; the LORD, amid trumpet blasts.
Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise.
God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

For king of all the earth is God; sing hymns of praise.
God reigns over the nations, God sits upon his holy throne.
God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

Second Reading: A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians 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..

(The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: St. Paul explains the theological meaning of Jesus' exaltation by saying, "May God enlighten the eyes of our hearts so that we may know the great hope to which we have been called." Our great hope is that one day we too will be ascending to heavenly glory, provided that, with His grace, we live out our faith in Him through the mission of loving service He entrusts to us. Our mission is to preach the good news of salvation to the whole world by word and deed. We continue to receive the divine assistance and spiritual gifts necessary for our Christian witnessing through the Holy Spirit Whom the risen Jesus, after his ascension, asked the Father to send on his Church

Gospel Reading: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. Mark 16:15-20

Jesus said to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents with their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God. But they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ/ Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Meditation on the Ascension of Jesus: Each Sunday we profess through the Creed, "He ascended into heaven." Christ's Ascension was the culmination of God's divine plan for Christ Jesus – his return to his Father with his "Mission Accomplished." Ascension is the grand finale of all his words and of the works He has done for us and for our salvation. It is a culmination, but not the conclusion. The feast of the Ascension celebrates one aspect of the resurrection, namely Jesus' exaltation. The focus of this feast is the heavenly reign of Christ. The Lord is now "seated at the right hand of the Father" as we profess in the Nicene Creed, meaning He alone is in control of the continuing plan of salvation through the Spirit, unrestricted by time, space or culture. Thus in the Paschal Mystery, Jesus' passion, death, resurrection, ascension and the sending of the Holy Spirit form one unbroken reality which is to be understood by faith. The Ascension means that Jesus is with his Father in glory after he completed his mission on earth.

Jesus told his disciples, "*Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature*". We are the body of Christ and we have been entrusted our discipleship role to preach the gospel to people who have not heard about Christ and to some of our own frozen Christians who are Christians by name and showing up in churches on festive occasions. The driving power that carried the apostles, martyrs and saints missionaries around the world and set Christ's church in motion was/is the faith that comes from the resurrection of Jesus. When we experience and realize the Risen Christ and grow in his love, then He will give us both opportunities and the inner strength to tell his mission.

This mission command of Jesus is not given to a select few but to all believers. To be a Christian is to be a proclaimer and an evangelizer. There is a difference between preaching and proclaiming. "*We preach with words but we proclaim with our lives.*" Jesus' Ascension reminds us that we are being commissioned to go forth and proclaim the Gospel of life and love, of hope and peace, by the witness of our lives. We are called to be proclaim and

evangelize the gospel to our families first and others. Unless we have the witnessing life in our personal and family life, we cannot proclaim and evangelize others. For us Christians, mission is a commission, given by God himself. It is our fundamental purpose for our existence. Without knowing our mission, we cannot live our daily life meaningfully.

Christmas and Ascension: The Ascension is most closely related to Christmas in meaning. Christmas reminds us of the human and divine becoming united in the person and life of Jesus. At the Ascension, this human being (the person and the resurrected body of Jesus) became for all eternity a part of who God is. It was not the spirit of Jesus or the divine nature of Jesus that ascended to the Father. It was the resurrected body of Jesus: a body that the disciples had touched, a body that had eaten and drunk with them both before and after His Resurrection, a real, physical, but gloriously restored body, bearing the marks of nails and a spear. This is what ascended. This is what, now and forever, a living, participating part of God. The Ascension, along with the Incarnation, is here to tell us that it is a good thing to be a human being; indeed it is a wonderful and an important and a holy thing to be a human being. It is such an important thing that God did it. Even more, the fullness of God now includes what it means to be a human being.

Heaven, a true home: The message from today's feast is that we will also share the glory of Christ in heaven after our earthly life. Our present life is limited by time and space. In this life, we may go through pains and sufferings. But our true home is in heaven and that is our destiny. We should achieve that, the true purpose of our present life. In achieving that, the ascended Jesus is our source of strength and encouragement. We have also the presence of the Holy Spirit as our counselor to guide us in our spiritual journey towards heaven.

Anecdote: A beautiful old story tells of how Jesus, after his Ascension into Heaven, was surrounded by the angels who began to enquire about his work on earth. Jesus told them about His birth, life, preaching, death and Resurrection, and how he had accomplished the salvation of the world. The Archangel Gabriel asked, "Well, now that you are back in Heaven, who will continue your work on earth?" Jesus said, "While I was on earth, I gathered a group of people around me who believed in me and loved me. They will continue to spread the Gospel and carry on the work of the Church." Gabriel was perplexed. "You mean Peter, who denied you thrice and all the rest who ran away when you were crucified? You mean to tell us that you left them to carry on your work? And what will you do if this plan doesn't work?" Jesus said, "I have no other plan -- it must work." Truly, Jesus has no other plan than to depend on the efforts of his followers! He is counting on each and every one of us. Let us be faithful in proclaiming the gospel message and participating in the various missions of the church.

Concluding Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, right before your Ascension into heaven you told your apostles to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth upon receiving the Holy Spirit. May we be similarly inspired to spread your Gospel message in word and deed, according to your will for us. And may we do so prudently and joyfully, with your help, your guidance, and your grace! Risen Lord, draw us to you. Let your kingdom come through us to the world as we live as your witnesses until you come again; Bless us that we may always remember your glorious ascension so that we may will to seek what is above, Heaven, where you are seated at the right hand of God the Father. Amen (Hail Mary... Blessing)