

1-2-2022

## Ascension - 29 May 2022

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### Recommended Citation

Doran, Anthony. "Ascension - 29 May 2022." *Pastoral Liturgy* 52, no. 2 (2021): 17-7. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss2/26>

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# 29 May 2022

## Ascension of the Lord

Reflection by Anthony Doran

### Introduction

The Ascension of Jesus marks the end of one era and the beginning of a new era of the Church's life. While the physical presence of Jesus on earth ends with the return of Jesus to the Father, it is now the presence of the Spirit which gives life to the Church. And more than just life. The presence of the Spirit is also the impetus for us to go out and proclaim the Good News to all the world.

### Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you sit at the right hand of the Father.  
Lord, have mercy.

You look upon your people with mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.

You have conquered death.  
Lord, have mercy.

### First Reading

**Acts 1:1-11**

Luke shows how the mission of Jesus to initiate the end-time restoration of the Chosen People of God finds expression in the emergent, Spirit-filled Christian community in Jerusalem.

### Responsorial Psalm

**Psalm 46:2-3. 6-7. 8-9. R. v.6.**

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

This psalm extols God's sovereign majesty, ruler over all the nations of the earth. For this, all the peoples of the earth rejoice.

## Second Reading

### Ephesians 1:17-23

Today's reading is a prayer of thanksgiving from the opening of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. God's power, at work in Christ, inaugurates a new era for the whole of Creation, and for this, we do give thanks.

## Gospel Reading

### Luke 24:46-53

Luke's account of the Ascension differs markedly from the more famous Matthean account. Instead of being sent out to all the world, the disciples are sent back to Jerusalem 'until they are clothed with power from on high.' For Luke, it is the Spirit who empowers the disciples (and therefore the Church) for mission.

## Reflection

Late last year, Melbourne Theatre Company staged William Shakespeare's play 'As You Like It'. After so many months of COVID restrictions preventing any performance, it was certainly a joyful return to the theatre. Towards the end of Act II, Jacques utters his famous speech:

All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players.  
They have their exits and entrances... (As You Like It: II, 7, 139-141)

The theatre was absolutely silent as Jacques spoke these words: not only was the actor playing Jacques exceptional, but a deep truth resonates behind Shakespeare's words. People come and people go. People arrive and people depart. People are born and people die. Most societies usually mark the time of birth and death with rites and ceremonies – we Catholics know this better than most. Births and deaths are registered because important public consequences flow from them – they affect other people. New arrivals are greeted and cooed over; new departures are prayed for and mourned.

The last we know of people in life is their death. This is what the apostles believed when Jesus died and why they felt so shattered and forsaken. Jesus' death was difficult for the disciples because they thought it meant a future without hope. But, in their experience of him as their risen Lord, their faith was renewed and their hope was reborn. But they still had to face the fact that he would walk among them no longer, for he had to return to the Father. It is to mark that time of Jesus' return to the Father that we celebrate the Ascension.

In today's readings we have two stories of Jesus' final departure. Both stories are written by Luke. Luke brings his gospel to a close with the story of Jesus' ascension. He also opens his second book, the Acts of the Apostles, with the story of Jesus' ascension. In doing that, Luke tells us that Jesus' return to the Father is the completion of his mission, while at the same time it marks the beginning of a new age. The Ascension of Jesus is both an ending and a beginning. Death was not the final departure for Jesus. Our faith proclaims that God raised him from the dead and that he let himself be known to his chosen followers so that they could experience new life in him. This experience of new life will become the basis for their preaching to others.

In Luke's Gospel when Jesus appears to his disciples, he does not breathe the Holy Spirit on them and commission them to go out and preach to all the nations. Rather Jesus tells the disciples to stay in the city of Jerusalem. They are to go nowhere preaching in his name because they are not yet empowered to do so. For Luke, Jesus has to go before the Holy Spirit can come. His going means the coming of the Spirit.

The disciples are not yet ready. They cannot witness to Jesus yet because they cannot fall back on their own resources to minister to other people. Their own resources are not enough for ministry. First, they must have a new wardrobe, a new outfit. They must be 'clothed with the power from on high'. But before that can happen, Jesus must go. So, he takes them to Bethany, blesses them, and his ascension from there marks the time of the end of his appearances. It also celebrates the completion of his mission. It is completed. Now is the time of the Spirit.

When Jesus began his public ministry, he was first invested with the power of the Spirit. In his baptism, Jesus received power and authority from the Father through the experience of the Spirit. It was in that power, 'filled with the Holy Spirit', that he began his public ministry. The Spirit marked the time of Jesus' new beginning, his time of ministry, his time for reaching out to others and ministering to them with power.

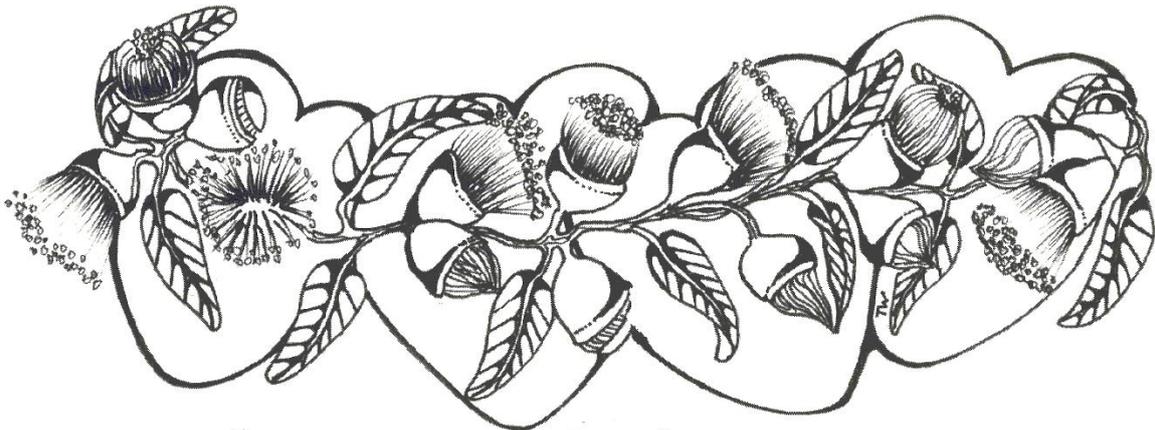
This same process of investiture is repeated for the followers of Jesus. The only difference is that now Jesus sends the Spirit from on high. When the disciples receive that Spirit, like Jesus, they will be empowered to minister to others and exercise a new authority. This is the beginning of the Church: a beginning which is made possible only in the Spirit of God.

And we believe that, as the Spirit made the beginning of the Church, that same Spirit empowers the community of believers today. The Spirit makes a new beginning for us. That is why next week's solemn feast of Pentecost is so important. It is not just a memory of the beginning of the Church, but a celebration of the Spirit at the heart of the Church today. Without the Spirit, we have to rely on our own resources. And we know that our own resources are not enough. We can minister to others in Jesus' name only in the Spirit.

Each of us gathered here is part of the Church. Each of us has a different role to play in the power of the same Spirit. This is what Paul prays for the Christian community at Ephesus in the Second Reading: that they may be blessed with the Spirit of God.

Without it, the community dies. With the Spirit, we have life and power. As the great and solemn feast of Pentecost approaches, we pray that we might be clothed anew with power from on high. Without that, we can go nowhere. Like the Apostles before Pentecost, we find that we must stay put because we have no resources for ministry. But, clothed with the Spirit, we can go anywhere and do anything.

Glory be to him whose power working in us  
can do infinitely more than we can hope or imagine.  
Glory be to him from generation to generation  
in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever.  
Amen.



*I will come back to you and  
your hearts will rejoice.*

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

Friends, Jesus shares his living presence with us and all creation. So, in confidence, let us bring our prayer for the needs of the world.

## Petitions

We pray for the Church, Christ's Body. May the people of God be filled with the wisdom and perception to proclaim the love of Christ in new ways.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Church on the journey of synodality. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our minds and fill us with hope as we continue Christ's work on earth.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for First Nations peoples of this land during National Reconciliation Week. May we be guided to speak the truth, promote healing and build harmony among all peoples of Australia.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all who are working for climate justice. May they be strengthened and encouraged in their work of protecting our oceans, forests, rivers and skies and all creatures that inhabit them.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all who are lonely, isolated or living with mental health issues due to the pandemic. May they receive the comfort and care they need and be able to flourish and participate fully in their communities.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all our loved ones who have died. May they be raised to eternal glory with Christ. May the memories of their goodness comfort us in our grieving and inspire us in our living.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

God of all ages, you are with us till the end of time. Hear these prayers we bring in the name of Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## **Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva**

### **GA**

Alleluia, sing to Jesus. W C Dix/R H Prichard. 371  
Be not afraid. B Dufford SJ. 449  
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. J Quinn SJ/ O Gibbons. 495  
Hail Redeemer, King divine! P Brennan/ W Flood. 390  
Holy God, we praise your name. C Walworth/ German Melody. 411  
Lord, you give the great commission. J Rowthorn/C V Taylor. 313  
O Christ, the great foundation. T Lew/ S Wesley. 483

### **AOV1**

Alleluia, sing to Jesus. W C Dix/R H Prichard. 191  
Be not afraid. R Dufford SJ. 114

### **AOV2**

Holy God, we praise your name. C Walworth/ German Melody. 129  
The fullness of God. F Andersen MSC. 62

### **AOV4Kids**

Look up, look down. K Sherman. 4  
To know, worship and love. K Abba/J Abrahams. 22

### **CWB**

Alleluia, sing to Jesus. William Chatterton Dix. 619  
Christ, our Lord, the prince of ages. Anon. 644  
Glorious in majesty. Jeff Cothran. 688  
Hail, redeemer, king divine. Patrick Brennan CSsR. 703  
Let the earth rejoice and sing, alleluia. Melvin Lloyd Farrell. 731  
Rejoice, the Lord is king! Charles Wesley. 799

### **CWBII**

A hymn of glory let us sing! Venerable Bede, tr. Elizabeth Rundle Charles. 372  
Clap your hands all you nations. John L. Bell. 373  
Glorious in majesty. Jeff Cothran. 374  
Hail the day that sees him rise. Charles Wesley. 375  
Let the earth rejoice and sing. Melvin Lloyd Farrell. 376  
Rejoice! the Lord is king. Charles Wesley. 377  
Christ, our Lord, the prince of ages. Anon. 399  
Hail, redeemer, king divine! Patrick Brennan CSsR. 400  
Alleluia! sing to Jesus! William Chatterton Dix. 449  
Go, make of all disciples. Leon M. Adkins. 493

### **S&S1**

Shouts of joy. Ken Canedo. 65

### **S&S2**

God mounts his throne. Curtis Stephan, 256

## **Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy**

Psalm 46: *God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord./Alleluia.*

Psalm 46: Robert Kreutz/ Joseph Gelineau SJ.CWB 311

Pslam 47: All peoples, clap your hands. Kevin Siddell. GA 39

Psalm 47(46): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 50

God mounts his throne: Paul Mason. PM pg. 38

God mounts his throne: Marty Haugen. LPC pg. 70

## **Music selections by Michael Mangan**

Feel the power (TCS) [Gathering]

Till the end of time (TT) [Recessional]

Hearts on fire (Vs 2 & 3) (SHOF) [Recessional]



**May my followers be  
one as we are one.**