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Ascension - 12 May 2024

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12 May 2024

Ascension of the Lord

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction

Our readings for the feast of the Ascension have a close relationship to those we will hear at the upcoming celebration of Pentecost. Both feasts are deeply interconnected, offering us entry to the cosmic mystery of the resurrection and the ongoing presence of Christ and the Spirit.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you brought all things to fulfilment. Lord have mercy.

You gift us with the Spirit. Christ have mercy.

You share all authority in heaven and on earth. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Acts 1:1–11

The departure of Jesus from the earthly realm opens onto two promises: the gift of the Holy Spirit and his own return.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 46(47):2-3, 6-9

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

The psalmist calls us to celebrate our God who is king over all the earth.

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:17–23

Christ's ascension to the highest heavens is a source of hope and commitment to his body the church.

OR

Ephesians 4:1–13

As Jesus leaves the earth, so his grace fills the earth. As far above all things he is intimate to all things.

Gospel Reading

Mark 16:15–20

The risen Jesus sends his disciples into the whole of the world and to all creatures, remaining with them yet taking his place with God, reigning over the cosmos.

Reflection

There is a Pentecost feel to the Ascension Gospel from Mark, a sense that is matched in the passages from Ephesians and the opening text from Acts. However, Mark is not quite done with his approach to the designated Apostles! Our reading starts perhaps a verse late. In the prior sentence the risen Jesus admonishes the remaining Eleven for their hesitancy to believe that he was risen. His reproach to the leadership signals a reinvigorated fervour and passion in them for the mission of the Church. There is nothing half-hearted about Jesus' command: the followers are to go to the whole earth, and to all of creation. The good news is for every place and every aspect of creation.

The dynamic of the Ascension is the same. Jesus does not simply return to the heavens but takes his place beside God. He fills heaven and is at one with the divinity. At the same time, the Eleven go on mission, preaching everywhere. Their work is supported by Christ, who is working with them.

The same dynamic is in the Pauline lections. In the Ephesians 1 passage, we have a more full description of Jesus at the right hand of God. Christ is above all principalities and powers, now and forthwith. In this he remains present to his body, the Church, enabling it to be the fullness of his presence. The ascension is a way to speak of how the risen Jesus is revealed as touching all things, filling them, holding them, keeping them.

As the reading continues the emphasis falls to the Church, his body. We see this in the Ephesians 4 option, where we are reminded of the call to unity: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and below one differentiated ministry.

The earliest liturgical wisdom was that the feast of the Ascension was celebrated on the morning of the Sunday that followed the final week of Easter, and that Pentecost was celebrated that same evening. Our set of readings show how interconnected the two feasts are, both opening up our eyes to the presence of Christ and the Spirit in all creation and all history. With that is the insistence of the Church as the presence of Christ on earth, held in the power of the Spirit. This ongoing presence to all creation through the Church presages the eschatological fulfillment of all things in Christ's second coming.

In a way this feast about the risen Christ, is one about the nature of the church. Following Paul, it is the body of Christ on earth. Following Acts, it is infused by the

Spirit, a gift which enables the disciples to comprehend the reign of God. Following our Gospel, and its more salutary prior verse, the ascension is a source of energy and mission, of vitality and signs.

If this is the case, then what does it mean to go to the ends of the earth, to reach to all of creation? And what does it mean to acknowledge that the Lord worked through them and with them? There is a breadth in this mission, and a confidence in Christ, that reshapes our approaches, and goes beyond our boundaries. Which of course is our connection to the upcoming feast of Pentecost.



*I will pour out my
spirit on all people.*

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

People of God, Jesus told us that he will be with us always, until the end of the world. We therefore have confidence to ask God for all our needs.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and the leaders of our Church. On this World Day of Prayer for Christian Unity, may they lead us as one Church to take Christ to the ends of the earth and to all of creation.

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

We pray for leaders of the world who are faced with the difficulties of climate change. May they understand that Christ is present in all of creation and we have to care for the whole earth.

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

We pray for those who work to moderate climate change. May their efforts be truly centred on the created world and not only on their economic gain. May those countries who are at risk find authentic help in other nations.

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

We pray for our local environment. May all of us be inspired to follow Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and make sincere efforts to be good stewards for the created world.

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

We pray for those who are suffering from climate change and from wars and famine. May the aid that is offered by other countries be meaningful and valuable.

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

We pray for ourselves as we gather here around the table. May we, infused with the Spirit of the ascended Christ, fulfil our mission on earth to bring the reign of God to the world.

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

Conclusion

Father, with your Son at your side, we know that you will grant all these needs as you are the source of all mercy and love. We ask this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
A hymn of glory let us sing!				372	
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus	191		619	449	371
Be not afraid	114			653	449
Christ is the king! O friends rejoice			641	398	389
Christ our Lord, he gives life abundant			642		
Christ, our Lord, the prince of ages			644	399	
Christians, lift up your hearts			651	355	
Forth in the peace of Christ we go			681	489	495
Go, make of all disciples				493	
Glorious in majesty				374	
Hail Redeemer, king divine			703	400	
Hail the day that sees him rise				375	
Holy God, we praise your name		129	710	504	411
Let the earth rejoice and sing			731	376	
Lord, you give the great commission				308	313
O Christ, the great foundation				565	483
Rejoice the Lord is king			799	377	
The Church of Christ, in every age			818	613	
The fullness of God		62			
The Church's one foundation			819	614	484

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
Alleluia! Sing to Jesus		97	
God mounts his throne			256
I send you out	75		
My witness you'll be	98		
Shouts of joy		65	

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!*

	CWB	GA	JOBA	LPB	PM1
Psalm 46	311	39	pg. 49	pg. 72	pg. 38

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Hearts on fire (SHOF) [Gathering, Recessional]

Feel the power (TCS) [Gathering, Recessional]

One body in Christ (Esp V5) (TWB) [Communion]

Till the end of time (TT/SYJ) [Recessional]