

## Homily of Ascension of the Lord, Year A, 2026

**Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-9; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20**

The idea that Jesus was a political messiah never left Jesus' disciples even when Jesus was about to ascend into heaven. Jesus' disciples gave him a heroic welcome into Jerusalem, believing that he had come to overthrow the Romans. Then, he was arrested, crucified, and buried. When Jesus rose and reappeared, the disciples' conviction of his political messiahship became stronger.

In the first reading, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom of Israel?" I imagine that Jesus' answer was confusing to them. Jesus replied, "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" (Acts 1:6-7). The disciples might have wondered the link between restoring the kingdom of Israel and what Jesus said about the Father and the Holy Spirit. It could be why when Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles stood transfixed and gazed intently at the sky until two angels came to minister to them. Then, they returned to Jerusalem and remained together and gave themselves to constant prayer until they received the Holy Spirit which Jesus had promised them (Acts 1:12-14).

What does the Ascension of the Lord mean to us?

First, we pray for people who are transfixed in confusion and people who are transfixed in all kinds of overwhelming situations, that they may experience the ministration of God's angels to guide and lead them.

Second, Jesus ascended into heaven and is at the right hand of God interceding for us. St. Paul confirms this, "Christ who died, and ... rose and is seated at the right hand of God, interceding for us." Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). The Book of Hebrews writes, "Therefore, he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25). Also, 1 John 2:1 says, "We have an intercessor with the Father, Jesus Christ, the Just One." This is the reason all our prayers are to God, in the Holy Spirit, and through Jesus Christ.

Third, Jesus says, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you may be where I am" (John 14:3). The two angels who appeared to the disciples when Jesus ascended into heaven said to the disciples, "This Jesus has been taken up into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven." The Preface 1 of today's Eucharistic celebration says, "Mediator between God and man, judge of the world and Lord of hosts, he ascended, not to distance himself from our lowly state but that we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before." We are, therefore, to be ready for his return and go with him. Jesus speaks of his coming in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

Fourth, Jesus is no longer physically in the world. As his followers, we are to continue his good deeds by witnessing him to the world. He says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ... and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Jesus remains in the world through us, who are his disciples, ambassadors, and witnesses. We are his mouth, his hands, his feet, and his heart.

Fifth, as we celebrate Jesus' Ascension, we pray and look forward to the fulfillment of Jesus' promises. He says, "But I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7). Jesus also says, "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name; he will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you" (John 14:26). We pray that we may open our hearts to the teaching and reminding of the Holy Spirit. We are encouraged to participate in the Novena to the Holy Spirit.

Sixth, St. Augustine describes the mystical nature of Ascension in today's Divine Office: "He did not leave heaven when he came down to us; nor did he withdraw from us when he went up again into heaven. ... These words are explained by our oneness with Christ, for he is our head and we are his body."

Last Sunday, Jesus assured us, "I will not leave you orphans" (John 14:18). Today, in the gospel, he assures, "Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Therefore, let us switch from empty gaze to gazing on him trusting in his blessed assurance. Amen.

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