

Prayer at Home



Feast of the Ascension

(Yr A)

24th May 2020

Gather with family or on your own. Place an opened Bible on a table. Light a candle, white if possible, and place a crucifix and some flowers beside it and a bowl of water.

Begin with:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Antiphon: People of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens? This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven will return as you saw him go, alleluia.

Let us open our hearts to hear God's Word:

By your resurrection you have raised us to new life. **LORD, HAVE MERCY.**

By your ascension you lead us into the kingdom of God. **CHRIST, HAVE MERCY.**

By your Spirit you have made us temples of your glory. **LORD, HAVE MERCY.**

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

Opening Prayer

God of majesty,
Yours is the power that raised Christ from death,
Yours the glory that exalted him to your right hand.

By the mystery of the Ascension,
sustain our hope as we bear witness to our baptism.
by the perpetual outpouring of your Spirit,
confirm your Church in its mission of salvation.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead,
who lives and reigns with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Acts 1:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Why are you standing here looking into the sky? Jesus has been taken into heaven.

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.'

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee

standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 46:2-3, 6-9 (JB)

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

All peoples, clap your hands,
cry to God with shouts of joy!
For the Lord, the Most High, we must fear,
great king over all the earth. **R.**

God goes up with shouts of joy;
the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.
Sing praise for God, sing praise,
sing praise to our king, sing praise. **R.**

God is king of all the earth.
Sing praise with all your skill.
God is king over the nations;
God reigns on his holy throne. **R.**

Second Reading

Ephesians 1:17-23

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

He made Jesus to sit at his right hand in heaven.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 28:19, 20

Alleluia, alleluia!

Go and teach all people my gospel.

I am with you always, until the end of the world.

Alleluia!

Gospel

Matthew 28:16-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

The great literary masterpiece *Lord of the Rings* is an epic tale of good overcoming evil. If you have seen the movie or read the book, you will know of the small hobbit heroes, Frodo and his companion Sam, who have the seemingly overwhelming task of destroying the ring of evil, and unmaking its influence. But carrying the ring has terrible consequences. It casts a intense spell over any who wear it; it gives them the power to become invisible and turns their minds to treacherous and deadly thoughts.

Frodo and Sam are brave and accept the responsibility of taking the ring back to the mountain of Mordor, and destroying the ring in the fire from which it was made. They wouldn't have made it without each other.

At one point in the novel (I don't think it was part of the movies), as their journey becomes more perilous, the two have a conversation about the power of stories, and, in particular, about how their particular story might end. Sam makes the observation to Frodo that he used to think that the people in the great tales, in the great stories, would go out and find adventure, but he says, that's not the way it is at all, not with the stories that really matter, the one's that stay in the mind. Sam says, "They just seem to have landed in them, their paths laid that way." Then he asks, "I wonder what sort of tale we have fallen into?"

"I don't know," says Frodo, "and that's the way it is with real tales." And then Sam starts recalling one of the truly great stories of the hobbit world, the one story that that hobbits would tell from one generation to the next – "the kind of story that goes on past happiness and into grief and beyond it," he says. As he remembers the story, he comes to a moment of realisation. They carry with them a magical and mystical light from that very same adventure, that very story that he's talking about, a light in a crystal given to them as a gift along the way. Because of that light, Sam realises "We're still part of it, the tale goes on." "The great tales never end," says Frodo, "The people come and go when their parts ended." "Yes," says Sam, "they go home and have some rest."

Frodo is right, the great tales never end. And Sam is right too, we're part of the greatest story of them all – the story of the God of the Love, the Creator, who comes to us with the face of Jesus Christ. The story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is that great story that goes on past happiness, and into grief and beyond it.

In this sense, it is tempting to see the Feast of the Ascension as a kind of natural ending – the earthly presence of Jesus leaving us to make way for a more elusive and mysterious spiritual presence. It is not quite true as Sam says – Jesus isn't going home to get some rest and to leave the rest of the story to the Holy Spirit. That's not the point of the story at all. The story of the Ascension is not about not being able to see Jesus anywhere, but rather about being able to see Jesus everywhere.

But Sam and Frodo are absolutely right when they say the great tales never really end. We're still part of it and the tale goes on. And like them, we carry a light – a Christ-light. This is the gift of our baptism and this is why and how Jesus is everywhere. Jesus can be seen in everyone who lives, even if we need to look hard sometimes. Jesus is in everything that lives, even if sometimes we are blind. We are part of God's great story, and the story goes on through us. And the story of Jesus is the best story there is – because it is about everything and everyone.

Sam's insight is the message of the Ascension. We are all part of the great tale, that it goes on, and it goes on in us and around us. Our lives are a part of its telling. We celebrate this today. With this in mind, may we hear St. Paul's prayer as a prayer for us: "May God enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope God's call holds for you, what rich glories God has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that God has exercised for us believers." Where Christ the head has gone, we his body, hope to follow. That is why we celebrate that the great stories never really end. And like all the best stories, they get better each time they are told.

Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
At the words that follow, up to and including 'the Virgin Mary', all bow.
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

Bless yourself making a cross with some water from the bowl.

Prayers of Intercession

INTRODUCTION: The Liturgy of the Word reminds us that Jesus sends us an Advocate to plead our cause. Confident in this presence we place our prayers before God and one another.

For the Church; that in this time of separation, may we continue to witness to the gospel of love and mercy to the ends of the earth, especially where there is greatest need. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

For peace; that amid all our concerns and anxieties, Christ's presence may calm and strengthen us. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

For those who have lost their employment or are struggling with financial need; that they may sense that God is with them through the support of those around them. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

For our dispersed communities during this Easter Season; that, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we will discover a renewed sense of connection and communion with one another. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

For those suffering in mind or body during this Easter Season, particularly those affected in any way by this pandemic; that the Resurrected Christ, who bore the wounds of all humanity, may touch their lives with renewed courage and hope. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

For those who have died, especially those who have died alone this Easter Season; that they may come to know the joy of the Easter feast and rise in glory with Christ Jesus. **RISEN LORD, HEAR US.**

Almighty and all-merciful God,
lover of the human race, healer of all our wounds,
in whom there is no shadow of death,
save us in this time of crisis;
grant wisdom and courage to our leaders;
watch over all medical people
as they tend the sick and work for a cure;
stir in us a sense of solidarity beyond all isolation;
if our doors are closed, let our hearts be open.
By the power of your love destroy the virus of fear,
that hope may never die
and the light of Easter, the triumph of life,
may shine upon us and the whole world.
Through Jesus Christ, the Lord risen from the dead,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Holy Mary, health of the sick, pray for us.
St Joseph, guardian of us all, pray for us.

Placing our faith in the power of the cross and trusting that we are united to all Christians, in all times and in all places, on this sacred day we dare to pray:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Let us pray.

Almighty ever-living God,
who allow those on earth to share in your divine life,
grant, we pray,
that Christian hope may draw us onward
to where our nature is united with you.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord God,
Strength of the weary, medicine of the weak,
Be near to us as we call on you.
May you be our nourishment during this time
and renew us daily in your love.

May God bless us, keep us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.