

Lectionary Faith-Sharing Community
(SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER)
\ SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
Cicle B – May 16, 2021

OPENING PRAYER



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

All: **Sing praise to God, sing praise, sing praise to our king, sing praise.**

Leader: All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God.

All: **Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands, for his love is everlasting.**

Guide: *We invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit:*

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. Sends, Lord your spirit and renew the face of the earth.

Oh God, that you have instructed the hearts of your faithful with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us through the same spirit that always enjoy her divine consolation. By Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIRST READING [Acts 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.”

Luke wrote two books of the New Testament, although it could be interpreted as a single work in two volumes: The Gospel, and Acts of the Apostles. In both works he begins as if he were telling a story to a certain friend Theophilus. It is not known if this character existed, or if it is a literary device created by Lucas, when addressing a person whose name means "one who loves God." In this way, each of us can imagine being the recipient of these writings.

In the first lines of this second book, Luke summarizes what happened with Jesus Christ to begin the narration of the history of the nascent Church. Luke recounts that the appearances of the risen Jesus last forty days. A characteristic figure of the Bible to indicate "a long time". It is a parallel with those forty days that he spent in the desert at the end of his private life, just before starting his activity in Galilee.

The apostles can verify that Jesus, after passing through death, is alive in their midst. But Jesus decides to "leave the scene" and prepares the way for the Third Person. Jesus announces the coming of the Holy Spirit. And it came nine days after his Ascension into heaven. Jesus Christ, when making the promise of the coming of the other Paraclete asks them to wait for this promise to be fulfilled. (Since the wait was nine days, while the apostles and Mary waited praying, the Church has adopted the custom of holding novenas, the most relevant being the one preceding Pentecost). Jesus Christ, ascending to heaven, is no longer visibly among his disciples and the new form of divine presence is realized through the Holy Spirit.

(1) In the text we read the question that the disciples ask the Risen Jesus. It is obvious that they still did not understand the type of Messiah that he was. They did not understand his mission. What do you expect from Jesus Christ? Solutions for this life? Cure of diseases? Punishment for the bad and reward for the good? Another thing? What?

(2) Jesus insists on waiting for the Spirit that he has promised. How is the departure of Jesus Christ related to the coming of the Holy Spirit?

(3) Next week we will study the readings for the day of Pentecost. Do you think that after being enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the disciples changed their way of thinking about the mission of Jesus Christ?

(4) If we have received the Holy Spirit in our Baptism, how is it that sometimes we do not see Jesus Christ as he really is, and we distort the image of him? What or who hinders the action of the Holy Spirit in us?

SECOND READING [Ephesians 4 (1-13)]

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.

After the Son became incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, the history of mankind changed radically. Even for those who never believed in Christ, his life, death, and resurrection had an impact to which they cannot escape. We measure this change in human history in the New Testament every time we find words like salvation, ransom, deliverance, reconciliation, etc.

Some writings start from the idea that before Christ the situation was one of ignorance, and the presence of God incarnate among men has brought true knowledge. Therefore, authentic wisdom, which is now available to anyone, is not achieved through research, studies or human search. Only by receiving the gift of God is it possible to savor the real truth. This is what we read on the first paragraph of this reading. True knowledge has to do with Christ, in whom God's plan of salvation has been manifested and carried out.

(1) After reading the first paragraph of this reading, what request should we always put in our prayers?

(2) What is the difference between desire and hope?

(3) Christians, should we practice desire or hope? Why?

(4) How do you understand that "Christ is the head of the Church"?

GOSPEL [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 text chosen for this Mass contains the closing of the Gospel of Mark. In a few lines he describes what other evangelists present to a greater extent. Mark presents us with the idea that with the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ the “story” of the Gospel does not come to an end, but on the contrary, the horizon widens (“Go all over the world”, says the Lord).

We note that the ascension itself is not described, but the entrance of Jesus Christ in heaven is emphasized. It is also very clear that, once the mission of Jesus Christ in the world has been fulfilled, the one of his disciples will begin. Christians are to preach and do the same as their Master.

The evangelist uses the formula "Lord Jesus" with a deliberate intention, to emphasize that of the two natures of Jesus, the divine definitely replaces the human. We note that for the author the anecdotal part of the Ascension is not so important, but its theological importance. And to enhance the theological significance they relate it to his enthronement "at the right hand of the Father." The ascension of Jesus Christ signifies the culmination of his work and the triumph over sin and death. Now free from human needs, he lives forever and is at the same time a promise that the same thing will happen to us at the end of time.



Nothing is said about the Ascension in Matthew's gospel, and the same is true of John's. Only Luke and this very brief passage from Mark attest to what we Christians solemnly celebrate. And Luke does it in more detail in his second book, the Acts of the Apostles (which was read in the first reading). Regarding this narrative, at the end it is said that the disciples stared at the sky. It is worth reflecting on two attitudes that have been lived in the Church: that of remaining "looking up", that is, living exclusively pending on the other life... a kingdom of heaven disconnected from the struggles and miseries of this life. In other words, a disembodied Christianity, spiritualistic, refuge and flight. But there are also those who look so much at the earth that they end up losing the reference point that Christ marks, that is, a kingdom of God focused on the temporal needs of man. We must never lose our balance: Neither stay looking up, nor forget doing it. In other words, to fulfill the mission entrusted by the Lord, to fight for a better world, where love reigns in solidarity that helps us to keep our hearts safe from the onslaught of hatred and that moves us to give our lives for whoever is needed. , and when necessary, looking forward to the establishment of the kingdom of God here on earth and working for all of us to one day come to savor the beatific vision of God.

(1) It is not very easy to leave our own environment to preach the Gospel. How are we going to respond to the call of Jesus Christ to share the Good News with the world?

(2) Do you remember situations or people that can serve as an example of "messengers of the Gospel"?

(3) Is it difficult or easy for you to do something similar? Why?

(4) Is your attitude that of looking up, ignoring the needs of the world, or being more aware of the needs of the world and forgetting to look up? How can a balance be established between the two attitudes?

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord of the day and night, of the beginning and of the end: At the closing of this meeting, once again we lift up our hearts to You, divine source of all life.*

All: **We thank you for the gifts you have bestowed on us. We thank you for the love expressed in companionship and understanding, mutual respect and shared ideas. We give you thanks for your holy power that will help us in our concerns that we have shared. For these and all the gifts that come from You, we give you thanks.**

Leader: *Lord hear our prayers* (attendees can propose their own needs of prayer)

All: **In the same way in which we have being blessed by your presence as we meet, we ask now to bless our safe return to our homes. May your holy blessing be over us + in the name of the Father ...**

Leader: *May the King of the eternal glory gather us together in His heavenly banquet. Amen.*

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