

CELEBRATION OF THE WORD

The Ascension of the Lord

This is a celebration of the Word to aid your worship this Sunday, alone or with family. If possible, place a simple cross or crucifix prominently in the room and light one or more candles. You can also place an image of the Virgin Mary there if possible. As a family, choose the one who leads the prayer, and someone to do the readings.

Whoever leads the prayer can say:

“The Ascension of Jesus into heaven,” Pope Francis said, “acquaints us with this deeply consoling reality on our journey: in Christ, true God and true man, our humanity was taken to God. Christ opened the path to us.... If we entrust our life to him, if we let ourselves be guided by him, we are certain to be in safe hands, in the hands of our Savior.” For this reason, as Pope Benedict XVI once said, it would be a mistake to interpret the Ascension as “the temporary absence of Christ from the world.” Rather, “we go to heaven to the extent that we go to Jesus Christ and enter into him.” Heaven is a person: “Jesus himself is what we call ‘heaven.’”

SIGN OF THE CROSS

After a moment of silence, let everyone begin by making the Sign of the Cross:

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

HYMN

Choose an appropriate hymn.

We place ourselves before the Lord, beginning with an act of contrition:

My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart. In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good, I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things. I firmly intend, with your help, to do penance, to sin no more, and to avoid whatever leads me to sin. Our Savior Jesus Christ suffered and died for us. In his name, my God, have mercy.

The following are the readings of the Ascension of the Lord.

**A reading from
the Acts of the Apostles**

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.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

—• PSALM 47 •—

R (6) God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

Or: Alleluia.

All you peoples, clap your hands,
shout to God with cries of gladness.

For the Lord, the Most High, the awesome,
is the great king over all the earth. **R**

God mounts his throne amid shouts of joy;
the Lord, amid trumpet blasts.

Sing praise to God, sing praise;
sing praise to our king, sing praise. **R**

For king of all the earth is God;
sing hymns of praise.

God reigns over the nations,
God sits upon his holy throne. **R**

**A reading from
the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians**

1:17-23

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia, alleluia. Go and teach all nations, says the Lord;/ I am with you always, until the end of the world. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

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

**A reading from the conclusion of
the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

28:16-20

THE ELEVEN DISCIPLES went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Allow for a few minutes of silence and meditation. In a family, the leader could offer some words of consolation and reflection at this moment, such as: “Lord, we believe with confidence that where you have gone—where you are—is where you are leading us as well. We know that you have not abandoned us by ascending to heaven, but have made your presence among us deeper and more intimate. Though we do not see you with our eyes, we trust that you remain with us and continue to guide us to the fulfillment of your promises.”

M E D I T A T I O N O F T H E D A Y

The Sweet Foretaste of Heaven

The central idea in the liturgy today is the raising of our hearts toward heaven, so that we may begin to dwell in spirit where Jesus has gone before us. “Christ’s Ascension,” says Saint Leo, “is our own ascension; our body has the hope of one day being where its glorious head has preceded it.” In fact, our Lord had already said in his discourse after the Last Supper, I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be.

The Ascension is, then, a feast of joyful hope, a sweet foretaste of heaven. By going before us, Jesus our head has given us the right to follow him there some day, and we can even say with Saint Leo, “In the person of Christ, we have penetrated the heights of heaven.” As in Christ Crucified we die to sin, as in the risen Christ we rise to the life of grace, so too, we are raised up to heaven in the Ascension of Christ. This vital participation in Christ’s mysteries is the essential consequence of our incorporation in him. He is our head; we, as his members, are totally dependent upon him and intimately bound to his destiny. God, who is rich in mercy, says Saint Paul, for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us...hath quickened us together in Christ...and hath raised us up...and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places through Christ Jesus (Eph 2:4-6). Our right to heaven has been given us, our place is ready; it is for us to live in such a way that we may occupy it someday.

Meanwhile, we must actualize the beautiful prayer which the liturgy puts on our lips: Grant, O almighty God, that we, too, may dwell in spirit in the heavenly mansions (Collect). Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also, Jesus said one day. If Jesus is really our treasure, our heart cannot be anywhere but near him in heaven. This is the great hope of the Christian soul, so beautifully expressed in the hymn...: O Jesus, be the hope of our hearts, our joy in sorrow, the sweet fruit of our life.

FATHER GABRIEL OF SAINT MARY MAGDALEN, O.C.D.

Father Gabriel of Saint Mary Magdalen († 1952) was a Belgian Carmelite priest, teacher, and spiritual director.

INTERCESSIONS

The leader can begin with these words:

Christ ascends into heaven, not to abandon us but to be our hope. Filled with certainty by this glorious event, we pray:

℟ Lord, hear our prayer.

For the Church: that the People of God will live with an ardent hope for heaven. ℟

That the authority of heaven will guide the actions of those who govern on earth. ℟

That Christian husbands and wives be strengthened in their loving commitment to one another, modeling the union of Christ and the Church. ℟

That all believers will witness to the presence of Christ in our midst through generosity, charity, and faithfulness to the Gospel. ℟

For all of the faithful departed: that they enjoy eternal life with Christ, risen from the dead and reigning gloriously in heaven. ℟

That through the grace of the Ascension we will be blessed to keep our minds and hearts fixed on the things of heaven. ℟

For an end to the coronavirus pandemic, for God's mercy on all who are suffering and dying, and for strength and protection on all healthcare workers dedicated to fighting it. Let us pray to the Lord. ℟

Personal intentions

Our Father....

An Act of Spiritual Communion:

My Jesus, I believe that You are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar. I love You above all things, and I desire to receive You into my soul. Since I cannot at this moment receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You. Never permit me to be separated from You.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and lead us to everlasting life. And may the souls of the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

*To conclude the celebration, you can sing or recite the following or another suitable hymn.
Turn and face an image of Mary, if you have one.*



Queen of heaven, rejoice, alleluia.
The Son whom you merited to bear, alleluia,
has risen as he said, alleluia.
Pray for us to God, alleluia.

V Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary,
alleluia!

R For the Lord has truly risen, alleluia!

Or:

R*egina caeli, laetare, alleluia,
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia;
ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*

V *Gaude et laetare, Virgo Maria, alleluia.*

R *Quia surrexit Dominus vere, alleluia.*

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