



FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

"BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS,
UNTIL THE END OF THE AGE."

The Ascension of the Lord took place 40 days after Easter, which this year, is celebrated on Ascension Thursday, May 13. However, in most dioceses in the United States the celebration of this solemnity and holy day of obligation is transferred to the following Sunday, May 16. The Ascension of the Lord is detailed in the Scriptures and in our creeds. Every Sunday, we profess it in the Nicene Creed: "(Jesus) ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end." Jesus' ascension concluded his work on earth to bring about our redemption that he began on Good Friday. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 662) "Jesus Christ, the head of the Church, precedes us into the Father's glorious kingdom so that we, the members of his body, may live in the hope of one day being with him forever." (no. 666)

In "Recovering the importance and the lessons of the Ascension," Father Jeff Kirby elaborates on the significance of this feast day. "When Christ ascended into heaven, he did not leave his human nature behind. He brought that nature, our human nature, into heaven with him. The Son of God did not leave us orphans. He still has his human nature, and still bears the wounds of his passion in the kingdom of heaven. By bringing his human nature into heaven, Jesus Christ opened paradise for the human family. With a glorified human body and a human soul, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity sits at the right hand of God the Father for all eternity. This incorporation of the human and the divine makes him our presence in eternity and the mediator between God and humanity.

"This is the pressing and inspiring lesson of the ascension. It touches the core of the Christian faith, our own dignity as human beings, and the life available to us after death. It is a strong reminder to us of how greatly we are loved and how intensely God desires fellowship with us."

The Ascension of the Lord is followed 10 days later by the feast of Pentecost. In fact, it was Christ's ascension that made Pentecost possible. "It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you," Jesus told his disciples. (John 16:7) But he promised: "I am with you always, until the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) To help you prepare for the feast of Pentecost, consider praying a novena to the Holy Spirit that can be prayed daily from the Friday after Ascension Thursday to the vigil of Pentecost.