

Sunday, May 8, 2016
The Ascension of the Lord
Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Acts 1:1-11

2nd Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23

Responsorial: Psalm 47:2-3, 6-9

Gospel: Luke 24:46-53

The Ascension of Jesus Christ, *A Day of Great Joy and Celebration*

As they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. (Acts 1:9)

At the Last Supper, when Jesus told the apostles that he was leaving, they were deeply disturbed (John 14:1). Yet after the Ascension, they were filled with joy (Luke 24:52). Why the change?

The apostles' sadness gave way to joy because of two promises Jesus had made to them: that he would be with them always and that after returning to his Father's house, he would prepare a place for them (Matthew 28:20; John 14:2-3). It's this second promise that we celebrate today. Jesus has ascended to heaven, and through his Spirit, he is preparing us for the day when he comes again in glory.

When Jesus ascended, he made all the angels subject to him (1 Peter 3:22; Ephesians 1:21). This means not only those angels who had already submitted to Jesus; it also means the fallen angels who serve the devil. Enthroned in heaven, Jesus has the power to restrain their malice and protect us from them. That's why he taught us to pray, "Deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13).

When Jesus ascended to heaven, his intercessory work for the Church continued. He is our advocate before the Father (1 John 2:1). This is no small task. It means that Jesus is always going to his Father on our behalf. It means that we will always have access to God's presence—whether we are doing well or not so well.

The ascended Christ has also empowered his Church to fulfill its mission. Paul said that God has made Jesus "head over all things," including "the church" (Ephesians 1:22). This means that we can trust Jesus and have great confidence in him, no matter how bleak things look. Jesus is in heaven. He is interceding for us. He has overcome even the demons. He is supreme over all creation. And best of all, he will never, ever abandon us. Isn't that comforting?

"Jesus, I put my hope and my trust in you."

(Many thanks to ***The Word Among Us*** (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

Sunday, May 8, 2016

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. In the first reading, St. Luke describes the instructions Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension into heaven. This included these very important words: “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.’” What do you believe these words mean? How do they apply to you?
2. Also in the first reading, after Jesus ascends, we hear these words from what are obviously angels: “This Jesus who has been taken up into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.” This is an obvious reference to Jesus’ Second Coming. How important to you is the Second Coming of the Lord? How important should it be? Why?
3. The responsorial psalm provides a foreshadowing of the joy and celebration that may have occurred in heaven upon Jesus’ ascension and return. Spend a minute or so in quiet reflection and try to imagine your first day in Heaven. What do you think it will be like?
4. In the second reading, St. Paul prays a powerful prayer for the believers in Ephesus, and for us. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father is part of this prayer. Pray this prayer slowly and meditate on the words as you do. What does this prayer mean to you?
5. The Gospel reading ends with the ascension of Jesus “up to heaven.” It goes on to say that his disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and they were continually in the temple praising God.” The Ascension of Jesus is a day of great rejoicing and hope for us as well, no matter what our current circumstances are -- as we look forward to our own ascension. Why is this so? What steps can you take to be more open to our risen and ascended Lord’s presence during the day?
6. The meditation ends with these uplifting words: “The ascended Christ has also empowered his Church to fulfill its mission. Paul said that God has made Jesus “head over all things,” including “the church” (Ephesians 1:22). This means that we can trust Jesus and have great confidence in him, no matter how bleak things look. Jesus is in heaven. He is interceding for us. He has overcome even the demons. He is supreme over all creation. And best of all, he will never, ever abandon us. Isn’t that comforting?” Do you find it comforting, and amazing, that Jesus is constantly praying and interceding for you? Why or why not?
7. Take some time now to pray to Jesus, now ascended and exulted at the Father’s right hand. Ask the Lord to fill your heart with an increased hope and trust in him. Thank him that he is your advocate before the throne of your heavenly Father. Use the prayer at the end of the meditation as a starting point.

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, a director of partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Maurice was also the founding Executive Director of the **National Fellowship of Catholic Men**, for which he is currently a Trustee (<http://www.nfcmusa.org/>). He can be contacted at mblumberg@wau.org or mblumberg@aol.com.]