

Sunday, May 28, 2017

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: Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus, Seated at the Right Hand of the Father, is Worthy of Our Praise

. . . 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. (Ephesians 1:21)

Today as we celebrate Jesus' ascension to heaven, let's join his disciples in lifting our hearts and minds heavenward as we pray:

“Lord Jesus, we praise you on this feast of hope and triumph! We adore you, Lord, seated at the Father's right hand! You have taken your place of glory and authority—the place reserved for you, the eternal Son of God. You left it for a short time when you came to earth to redeem us, but now you are enthroned in the heavens. And we have been raised up with you!

“We praise you, Lord, for every principality, every power falls under your authority. No matter how strong or terrifying, everything in this created world must bow down to you. No matter what we face, nothing can remove us from your loving protection!

“We exult in you, Jesus, for you rule over history itself. Past, present, and future—nothing is outside your loving gaze and your powerful intervention. From your glorious throne, you hold all our lives in your hands.

“Jesus, you are worthy of praise! Every enemy has been placed beneath your feet. This means that nothing can overpower you—not Satan, not death, not suffering, not sin. You have defeated them all! You are above all things, and in you all things hold together.

“Jesus, now exalted to the Father's right hand, you are the head of the body, the Church! No matter what human imperfections exist in your Church, we can be confident that you will continue to purify us. You intercede for us every day, asking your Father to pour out immeasurable grace to help us overcome our sin and live in love. Jesus, we believe that your victory is ours, and we place our trust in your love!

“Jesus, today is a day to celebrate! We gaze on your glory and know that all things are in your hands!”

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Questions for Reflection/Discussion:

1. The first reading describes Jesus' resurrection appearances and words to his apostles during the forty days leading up to his ascension. This includes telling them 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." After Jesus ascends, we hear these words spoken to the apostles from what are obviously angels: "Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven."
 - Why do you think Jesus' emphasized to his apostles the importance of waiting to be "baptized with the Holy Spirit," that is, receiving "the promise of the Father"? Why is this also important to us as well?
 - How important to you is the promise of Jesus' "return," that is, his second coming? Why?
2. The responsorial psalm provides a foreshadowing of the joy and celebration that may have occurred in heaven upon Jesus' return: "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."
 - Why do you think the reaction in Heaven is described using such words as "shouts of joy," "trumpet blasts," and "Sing praise to God, sing praise; sing praise to our king, sing praise."
 - Spend a minute or so in quiet reflection and try to imagine your first day(s) in Heaven. What do you think they will be like?
3. In the second reading, St. Paul prays a powerful prayer for the believers in Ephesus, and for us. His prayer begins with these words: "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." He continues his prayer by describing the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to the right hand of the Father.
 - Why do you think receiving a "Spirit of wisdom" results in "knowledge of him" and the enlightenment of our hearts results in knowing "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"?
 - What does this prayer mean to you? Would you consider praying parts of this prayer for family members and others? What do you think the fruits of doing this would be?
4. The Gospel reading tells of Jesus' final appearance to the apostles and their response: "When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted." The reading ends with these final words that are the very last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."
 - Why do you think one of the apostles' initial reactions to Jesus' appearance was "they doubted"?
 - What do you think their reaction was to his final words?
 - Why should these final words of Jesus fill us with joy, especially these words: "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age"?
 - What steps can you take to be more open to Jesus' presence with you during the day?
5. The meditation is in the form of a prayer and begins with these words: "'Lord Jesus, we praise you on this feast of hope and triumph!" The meditation ends with these words: "Jesus, we believe that your victory is ours, and we place our trust in your love!"
 - In what way do you think the feast of the "Ascension of the Lord" is a "feast of hope and triumph"?
 - How would you describe the "victory" that is ours through the passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord?
6. Take some time now to pray and thank the Lord for his faithfulness in always being with you, loving you, and caring for you. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as the starting point.

"Jesus, today is a day to celebrate! We gaze on your glory and know that all things are in your hands!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in 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** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of

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