



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

# Family Faith Focus

Volume 8, Issue 43

May 24, 2020

## Dates to Remember

- All Masses and Parish Gatherings have been suspended by Cardinal Cupich until further notice.
- Please see our parish website for more information and links to view Sunday or weekday Masses online.

## Being Men and Women of the Ascension

The Lord's Ascension into heaven inaugurates a new form of Jesus' presence among us and calls us to keep eyes and hearts open to encounter him, serve him, and bear witness to him to others. We are to be men and women of the Ascension, that is, those who seek Christ along the paths of our time, bringing his word of salvation to the ends of the earth. On this journey we encounter Christ himself in our brothers and sisters, especially in the poorest, in those who suffer in their very flesh the harsh and humiliating experience of new forms of poverty. As at the beginning, the risen Christ sent his apostles with the power of the Holy Spirit, so too does he send us today.

— Pope Francis

## The Ascension of the Lord

## Matthew 28: 16-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

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.**

## Ascension Thursday or Ascension Sunday?

The first reading for the solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord comes from the Acts of the Apostles, and speaks of Jesus "appearing to them (the Apostles) during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

In Scripture, the number "forty" is used to represent a time of preparation before the fulfillment of a mission that God has ordained. In the Old Testament, the Israelites spent forty years wandering in the desert before entering the promised land. Jesus fasted and prayed in the desert for forty days before he began his public ministry, and, after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to and instructed his disciples during a forty day period before ascending back to his Father in heaven. So, the traditional day on which to celebrate the Ascension of the Lord has always been exactly forty days after Easter Sunday, and therefore, always on a Thursday.

Why then are we celebrating Ascension Sunday instead of Ascension Thursday? The answer is that in most parts of the United States, the bishops made the decision a number of years ago to transfer the Ascension from Thursday to the following Sunday to encourage greater Mass attendance to celebrate this tenet of our faith that we profess each week in the words of the Creed, "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father." Sunday, of course, is always a holy day of obligation for Catholics.

However, in some ecclesiastical provinces in the United States, for example Boston and New York, the Ascension is still celebrated on the Thursday that falls exactly forty days after Easter, which this year is May 21. In those dioceses, Ascension Thursday is celebrated as a holy day of obligation, meaning that the solemnity is to be observed by attendance at Mass.

## Sunday Gospel Connection: May 24, 2020

### The Ascension of the Lord, Cycle A

### Matthew 28: 16-20

**Gospel Background:** Today's Gospel is taken from the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's Gospel quickly moves from the disciples' discovery of Jesus' empty tomb, to Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to the commission that Jesus gives his disciples in today's Gospel.

The Final Commission, as this Gospel is sometimes called, is given on the mountaintop. Throughout Scripture, the most important events happen on the mountaintop, and Matthew has used this motif throughout his Gospel. Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Peter, James, and John had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop (Matthew 17:1-8). Also in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus taught the crowds from the mountaintop in what we now call the Sermon on the Mount.



Here we are told that the eleven disciples go the mountaintop in Galilee, as Jesus had instructed through Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (cf. Matthew 28:9-10). They see Jesus, and both worship and doubt at the same time. Jesus approaches them and commissions them to baptize and teach, "to make disciples of all nations." It is a task which Jesus had previously prepared his disciples for; recall that Jesus had sent the twelve apostles to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal (cf. Matthew 10:1-15). However, earlier the Twelve were sent only to the House of Israel; in this Final Commission, the eleven are told to go to "all nations." The mission of Jesus is now to be taken to all people; the task now is to baptize and to teach.

Jesus commissions his disciples to baptize in the name of the Trinity, one of the clearest attestations found in Scripture for baptism in the name of the Trinity. In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of Paul, baptism is more frequently offered "in the name of Jesus."

The ending of Matthew's Gospel can be understood as the beginning of the Church. Jesus commissions his disciples to continue to teach in his name and to bring others into the community of disciples through baptism. The Gospel ends, as it had begun, with the promise that Jesus will continue to be Emmanuel, "God with us" (cf. Matthew 1:23), for all eternity.

**Family Connection:** Just as Jesus sent his disciples to make disciples, our family, the domestic Church, is called to bear witness to the life of discipleship. That act of witnessing can take many forms. First and foremost our family should call people to discipleship by the example of our love for one another. That example is only the beginning; our love must extend beyond the family, reaching out to others and to the world.

Together with your family, identify one or more ways in which your family lives the life of Christian discipleship. Thank God for the blessing of the opportunity to be able to show God's love. Then read together today's Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20. Discuss what Jesus sends his disciples to do. Work together to identify one or more ways in which your family would like to do a better job bearing witness to the life of discipleship. Choose one of those ways and work together to make it happen. Pray as a family for the grace to be witnesses to the world of the life of discipleship. Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/ascension-of-the-lord-cycle-a/>

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# SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD



## God Most High

God Most High,  
you gave authority over heaven and earth  
to your Son.  
He now fills all creation with his presence  
to the glory of your name.  
He guides and governs us  
as the head of his body, the Church,  
and he brings our needs before you.

In him we pray—  
deepen our love for you,  
fill us with the knowledge and wisdom  
we need  
to live as true disciples,  
and strengthen our hope in the age to come.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, May 24, 2020

For All Time



*Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9; Ephesians 1:17–23; Matthew 28:16–20.* In both Jewish and Gentile writings revered people were sometimes shown being taken up into heaven. Their ascension was a metaphor for divine approval. Luke draws on this imagery to show not only that God approves of Jesus but that Jesus shares God's power. Having ascended, Jesus is spiritually and sacramentally present at all times and in all places.

In Acts, the disciples are uncertain what to do once Jesus has ascended. Two men dressed in white must explain the significance of the event, just as in Luke's Gospel two men in white explained the significance of the empty tomb. In Matthew's account of the Gospel, the disciples are also

uncertain about all that is happening. They worship the Risen Lord, but "they doubted." Perhaps they struggled to believe that Jesus really would remain with them.

When we feel hesitant and doubtful, we are reassured by those first followers of Jesus, who also struggled yet went forth to share the Gospel. They chose to trust their Lord. They embraced the Spirit he sent them and rejoiced in their deepening knowledge of God and God's love for the world. By remaining one with Christ, who has authority over all, they became part of God's new creation and now share in the Father's glory. It is now our turn, as fellow members of Christ's Body, the Church, to show others that Christ remains in the world and to invite them to be part of his reign.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, May 25

#### Fill Us

Although Jesus' disciples think they understand him, Jesus insists that their understanding is incomplete: during his passion, they will abandon him. Only with the gift of the Holy Spirit will they find the courage to stay faithful. By contrast, Paul encounters men who have not heard of the Holy Spirit but who are well prepared to receive this gift. We need both the Spirit and the formation of our faith community to guide us forward. Pray for the Spirit to fill you and your faith community. *Today's Readings: Acts 19:1–8; Psalm 68:2–3ab, 4–5acd, 6–7ab; John 16:29–33.*

### Tuesday, May 26

#### Imitators

There are similarities between Paul's journey to Jerusalem and Jesus' preparations for his passion. In John's account of the Gospel, Jesus gives a long farewell discourse in which he talks with his disciples about all that is going to happen. Paul also makes a formal farewell before facing the hardships that await him. As he says goodbye, Paul urges his listeners to imitate Jesus just as he has. Hear more of Paul's heartfelt words by reading all or part of his letter to the Philippians. *Today's Readings: Acts 20:17–27; Psalm 68:10–11, 20–21; John 17:1–11a.*

### Wednesday, May 27

#### Set Apart

In the Gospel passage, the word *world* refers to all that opposes God. As Jesus continues his prayer to the Father, he speaks about how his followers are set apart from the world. He prays that God will further consecrate or sanctify them to continue his work of sharing the truth of God's love. Paul also was set apart for God's work, and he reminded others to remain steadfast in holiness. In what concrete ways can you set yourself apart from the world? *Today's Readings: Acts 20:28–38; Psalm 68:29–30, 33–35a, 35bc–36ab; John 17:11b–19.*

### Thursday, May 28

#### That All May Be One

Religion, sadly, often divides people instead of uniting them. The Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on whether there was any kind of afterlife. Disagreements about beliefs and practices persist among Christians today. Such division compels us to bow our heads and echo Jesus' prayer for unity. *Today's Readings: Acts 22:30; 23:6–11; Psalm 16:1–2a and 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11; John 17:20–26.*

### Friday, May 29

#### In the Hands of Others

In Luke's Gospel account, Jesus tells his disciples that they will be handed over to kings and governors (21:12–13). In the passage from Acts, Paul is in the hands of the local governor who consults on his case with the king. In today's Gospel passage, Jesus tells Peter that one day Peter will be arrested and crucified. Centuries later, Christians still come into conflict with those in authority. Pray for those who are attacked or imprisoned because of their faith. *Today's Readings: Acts 25:13b–21; Psalm 103:1–2, 11–12, 19–20ab; John 21:15–19.*

### Saturday, May 30

#### The Work Continues

As we near the end of our Easter season, we hear the conclusions to the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel according to John. Paul has arrived at Rome, in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that his followers would be his witnesses throughout the world. Today Christian missionaries have crossed oceans to enter new regions and share the story of salvation. John's Gospel notes that Jesus said and did far more than any book could contain. The Jesus who has risen, ascended to his Father, and filled us with his Spirit continues his mission through us. May the good work we do in Jesus' name fill more volumes than could ever be written. *Today's Readings: Acts 28:16–20, 30–31; Psalm 11:4, 5 and 7; John 21:20–25.*

