

## **ASCENSION THURSDAY**

### **Thursday 13 May:        The Ascension of the Lord**

Christ's ascension is not a postscript to the resurrection or a warm-up act for Pentecost. It is a moment of unique grace within a process beginning with the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus through which the followers of Jesus come to understand and experience the full meaning of the unfolding of the kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven".

#### **Acts 1:1-11**

Conversion is the work of a lifetime. Even after Jesus has taught his disciples in his risen body for forty days, they still miss the point, modelling their expectations of the kingdom on the values and patterns of worldly power and prestige.

#### **Ephesians 1:17-23 or 4:1-13**

Growing to spiritual maturity and into the body of Christ is not about spectacular signs and wonders. Day by day, by responding to God's grace in the quiet and steady practice of virtues, we develop the gifts needed for the building of God's kingdom.

#### **Mark 16:15-20**

Mark's Gospel ends with listing miraculous signs and wonders that will identify the followers of Christ. But the true wonder is that as sinful human beings we can nevertheless be heralds of God's kingdom, producing in our lives and witness the fruits of God's Holy Spirit.



### Reflection

"So then the Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them,  
was taken up into heaven  
and took his seat at the right hand of God".

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and commissioned them to preach the Gospel throughout the world. The disciples were sent forth assured that the Lord would continue to work through them by the power of the Holy Spirit. All who believed the good news would be saved; whoever did not believe in the gospel would bring condemnation upon themselves. Forty days after Easter, Jesus ascended in glory to the "right hand" of the Father (the "right hand" - a symbol of authority and power). The feast of the Ascension commemorates the elevation of Christ's human nature into the condition of divine glory. It is the final act of Christ's work of redemption on earth. Christ's ascension gives us hope in the promise of our own ascension into heaven.

Today is the fortieth day of the Easter season. It should be the Feast of the Ascension but for pastoral reasons this celebration is postponed until Sunday. Forty is a number associated with a time of preparation.



**"He was taken up into heaven:  
there at the right hand of God  
he took his place."**

### **Fortieth Day**

The Hebrew people took **forty** years to reach the Promised Land. Later, the prophet Elijah was fed by bread from an angel, which energised him to walk for **forty** days and nights until he met with God on the holy mountain. And Jesus prepared for his public ministry with **forty** days of prayer and fasting. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that after his resurrection, the Risen Lord continued to appear to the disciples for **forty** days and told them about the

Kingdom of God. “In a short time you will no longer see me. You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn to joy.” Jesus allowed the apostles the traditional time, **forty** days, to be prepared for his final departure. The **forty** days between Easter and Ascension was a time of transition.

### **Transition**

This transition gave them time to move gradually from knowing Jesus by physical sight towards knowing him through faith; a transition from sorrow to joy; from his physical presence to his sacramental presence. Today is the fortieth day. Pentecost will be the fiftieth day. The nine days between today and Pentecost form the original novena. The apostles returned to the upper room in Jerusalem where they were united in prayer together with Mary, the mother of Jesus and other disciples. It is important that for the next nine days we should be united in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to renew the heart of the Church and the face of the Earth.

