

Cycle A The Ascension of the Lord

Reading 1 ACTS 1:1-11

In the first book, Theophilus, I dealt with all that Jesus did and taught until the day he was taken up, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. He presented himself alive to them by many proofs after he had suffered, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 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.”

When they had gathered together they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” He answered them, “It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

Responsorial Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

R. (6) God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

All you peoples, clap your hands, shout to God with cries of gladness, For the LORD, the Most High, the awesome, is the great king over all the earth.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

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.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

For king of all the earth is God; sing hymns of praise. God reigns over the nations, God sits upon his holy throne.

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.

Reading 2 EPH 1:17-23

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, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, 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. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Gospel MT 28:16-20

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.”

He said, *“Go...I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*

Today's Scriptures tell us that God loves us so much the Risen Christ is forever present to us, His Holy Spirit-filled community of believers, the Church, the Body of Christ.

Because of that, we are secure in what we have and confident in what we have been given.

The Archdiocese of Atlanta celebrates the Ascension of the Lord today the 7th Sunday of Easter rather than last Thursday so we don't overlook the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and His return to God's glory. The readings span his life recalling all that He did for us in His teaching and suffering, and that he commissioned us to spread the Good News *“to the ends of the earth.”*

But as the readings summarized the life of Jesus, they also touched on our human weakness. The Gospel said that when the eleven saw him, *“they worshipped, but they doubted.”* They believed, but didn't know how to respond. They knew oppression from the empire. They knew life can disappoint and hurt us all. Unfortunately, all too often this is our own situation as well. We believe in God, but fail to call on him. We rely on ourselves but then become frustrated when things don't go our way. But we must recognize something else in the Gospel...it didn't end in doubt...it ended with Jesus pushing the disciples into the world, empowered with the Holy Spirit!

Jesus takes our doubt and transforms it with His authority and love. He empowers us with the Holy Spirit and then commissions us to spread His Good News as spirit-filled members of His Body, the Church. He loves us so much that He includes us in His plan. Now that's a scary thought. You and me responsible for carrying on His plan. I could easily doubt that. I could give you a hundred reasons why that wouldn't be possible. But He is with us...His Holy Spirit is in us...He feeds us with His body and blood at every Mass....we will never fail when we let Him into our lives...when we put Him at the center of our lives, we will constantly do small works with great love building up his kingdom one-on-one, one person at a time, with the people he puts in our lives. Jesus never said life will be easy...He said, *“Go...I am with you always, until the end of the age.”*