

In other words, brothers, through the blood of Jesus we have the right to enter the sanctuary, by a new way which he had opened for us, a living opening through the curtain, that is to say, his body. And we have the supreme high priest over all the house of God. So as we go in, let us be sincere in heart and filled with faith, our minds sprinkled and free from any trace of bad conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us keep firm in the hope we profess, because the one who made the promise is faithful.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Mt 28:19, 20  
Alleluia, alleluia! Go and teach all people my gospel. I am with you always, until the end of the world. Alleluia!

**GOSPEL** Lk 24:46-53  
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

*While blessing them, he was taken to heaven.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You see how it is written that the Christ would suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that, in his name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses to this.

'And now I am sending down to you what the Father has promised. Stay in the city then, until you are clothed with the power from on high.' Then he took them out as far as the outskirts of Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. Now as he blessed them, he withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven. They worshipped him and then went back to Jerusalem full of joy; and they were continually in the Temple praising God.

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

**A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL**



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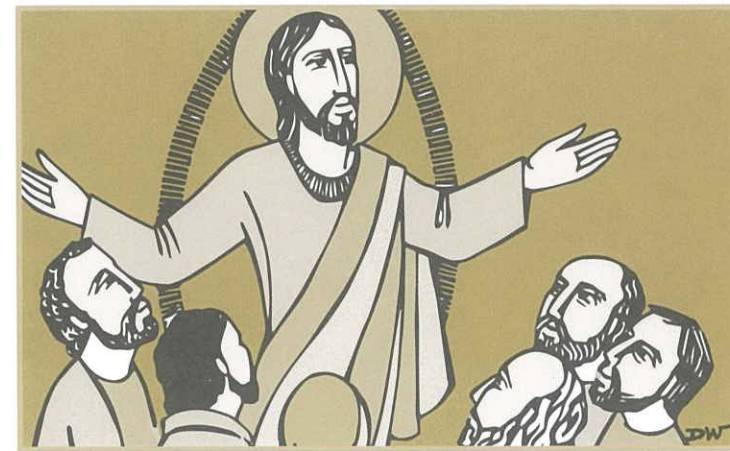
**JESUS ASCENDS TO THE FATHER**

Jesus has made his risen presence known to those who are to become his key witnesses. Now St Luke's Gospel depicts him making an ascent to heaven like that of the prophet Elijah in 2 Kings 2:1-18. As Elijah had promised his disciple Elisha a double share of his own prophetic spirit, so Jesus promises his disciples that they should wait in Jerusalem to be 'clothed with power from on high'. This promise of the Spirit, to be realised at Pentecost, ensures the continuity between his ministry, empowered by the Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:14, 18), and that of the Church that will carry it on.

Beyond this, the feast of the Ascension celebrates the risen Lord's exaltation to God's right hand—whence, through the power of the Spirit, he will continue his messianic subjugation of all powers hostile to God and the return of the entire cosmos to the rule of God (1 Cor 15:22-28; Phil 2:9-11).

The full realisation of this program remains an act of hope, as we know all too well. But Jesus' paschal victory has dealt the forces hostile to God a fatal blow. As the Church, empowered by his Spirit, carries on his messianic work, the Ascension assures her that in all her labour and suffering, the risen Lord stands at the right hand of God, interceding on behalf of all.

So the Ascension is not just something that happened to Jesus: it is the feast that celebrates the hope that his triumph will ultimately be ours as well.



**FIRST READING** Acts 1:1-11  
A reading from the Acts of the Apostles  
*Why are you standing here looking into the sky? Jesus has been taken into heaven.*

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.'

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near

them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

■ **The word of the Lord.**

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Ps 46:2-3, 6-9. R. v. 6  
R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord.  
(or Alleluia!)

1. All peoples, clap your hands, / cry to God with shouts of joy! / For the Lord, the Most High, we must fear, / great king over all the earth. **R.**
2. God goes up with shouts of joy; / the Lord goes up with trumpet blast. / Sing praise for God, sing praise, / sing praise to our king, sing praise. **R.**
3. God is king of all the earth. / Sing praise with all your skill. / God is king over the nations; / God reigns on his holy throne. **R.**

**SECOND READING** Heb 9:24-28, 10:19-23  
A reading from the letter to the Hebrews  
*Christ has entered heaven.*

It is not as though Christ had entered a man-made sanctuary which was only modelled on the real one; but it was heaven itself, so that he could appear in the actual presence of God on our behalf. And he does not have to offer himself again and again, like the high priest going into the sanctuary year after year with the blood that is not his own, or else he would have had to suffer over and over again since the world began. Instead of that, he has made his appearance once and for all, now at the end of the last age, to do away with sin by sacrificing himself. Since men only die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, too, offers himself only once to take the faults of many on himself, and when he appears a second time, it will not be to deal with sin but to reward with salvation those who are waiting for him.