

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Men of Galilee, why gaze in wonder at the heavens?
This Jesus whom you saw ascending into heaven
will return as you saw him go, alleluia.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

Gladden us with holy joys, almighty God,
and make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving,
for the Ascension of Christ your Son
is our exaltation,
and, where the Head has gone before in glory,
the Body is called to follow in hope.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Acts 1:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

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.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 46 (47):2-3, 6-9

Response:

God goes up with shouts of joy; the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.

Or Alleluia!

- 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.)
- 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.)
- 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

Eph 1:17-23

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Go, make disciples of all the nations;
I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 28:16-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We offer sacrifice now in supplication, O Lord,
to honour the wondrous Ascension of your Son:
grant, we pray,
that through this most holy exchange
we, too, may rise up to the heavenly realms.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Behold, I am with you always,
even to the end of the age, alleluia.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty ever-living God,
who allow those on earth to celebrate divine
mysteries,
grant, we pray,
that Christian hope may draw us onward
to where our nature is united with you.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday Message

THE WORD

FAREWELL PROMISE

MT 28:16-20

Today's Gospel is Matthew's account of Jesus' final meeting with his disciples after the resurrection. It can be divided into two parts: a description of Jesus' meeting with the disciples and a set of Jesus' sayings.

The disciples set out for Galilee. By telling us that Jesus had arranged to meet them on a mountainside in Galilee, Matthew seems to be inviting us to go back to the beginning of the story. Two important scenes in his Gospel were set on mountains in Galilee. The first is the Sermon on the Mount; the second is the transfiguration. Today's scene is the final revelation of the earthly Jesus in the Gospel, and it looks back to both the moment of glory revealed in the transfiguration and to the teaching of the first great sermon.

Matthew describes the disciples' emotions when Jesus arrives. We might have expected them to be overjoyed. Instead, he says that some worshipped him by falling to the ground but some held back, still hesitating. Matthew is aware that the Christian community doesn't consist only of enthusiastic believers. It also includes 'people of little faith.' He doesn't say outright that they refused to believe, simply that they hesitated or doubted.

Jesus' words to the disciples can be divided into three sayings. The first is that the Father has given him all authority in heaven and on earth. One of the great points of conflict between Jesus and his opponents was the source of his authority: was it really from God? The reality of the resurrection would seem to have put an end to that debate.

In the next saying, Jesus transmits his authority to the disciples, telling them to "Go make disciples of all nations." This verse is sometimes known as the Great Commission. It is also the source of the Church's mission to the world. Jesus shared his authority with the disciples. They are to make disciples of all nations, baptise them and teach them to observe the commandments that Jesus first passed on to them.

The final saying of Jesus is a promise: "I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." We might remember that when Jesus' birth was announced to Joseph, Matthew used a quotation from the prophet Isaiah: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." It is only now at the close of the Gospel that we hear another echo of that name. Emmanuel is not simply an ancient name for Jesus. It sketches out what Jesus will be in the future for those who follow him - an ever-present God of comfort and reassurance. ■

DO

Think about your commitment to your baptismal promises. How well do you witness to the Gospel? Can people tell that you are a believer?

LEARN

Jesus assures his disciples that he will be with them to the end of time. It's his solemn promise to them - and to each of us, too. This promise is at the very heart of our faith.

REFLECT

I'm not observant. I don't notice things. Often, I won't remember if someone I encountered had glasses, or whether a room had wallpaper or paint, or if it had a carpet. I've long thought I'd be hopeless in a court of law. Asked for details of an alleged incident, I'd struggle to provide them. I'd be no great assistance to an artist assembling an identikit of a suspect. Thank God, I've never been in that situation.

What do you think of when you hear the word 'witness'? Maybe, like me, you think court and court cases. Witnesses are important in court cases. The evidence of a credible witness can make all the difference. Barristers love when they have a powerful witness on their side.

The readings for the feast of the Ascension speak about being a witness, though not in the legal sense. Jesus is returning to his heavenly Father and, in his final message to his disciples, he promises them the gift of the Holy Spirit and then they'll be his witnesses. They will witness to him, from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. They will witness to Jesus' life, death and resurrection. "You shall be my witnesses," Jesus tells them.

And that is what they did. They witnessed to the Risen Lord beginning from Jerusalem. If they had not witnessed to the Good News, if they had not heeded Jesus' instruction, we wouldn't be here today. Christianity would have remained just another minor religious sect. It would have died with the apostles. We are called to follow the example of those first Christians by bearing witness to Jesus in our time and place. ■

SAY

"I thank you, Lord, for the gift of faith. Help me to witness to you every day. Amen."

PRAY

Pray for all those who find it hard to believe in the promise of Jesus that he is with them, that they will come to know that God is with them.