

READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 1:1-11

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 to 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

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.

**GOD GOES UP WITH SHOUTS OF JOY;
THE LORD GOES UP WITH TRUMPET BLAST.**

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.

**GOD GOES UP WITH SHOUTS OF JOY;
THE LORD GOES UP WITH TRUMPET BLAST.**

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.

**GOD GOES UP WITH SHOUTS OF JOY;
THE LORD GOES UP WITH TRUMPET BLAST.**

A READING FROM THE LETTER OF ST PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS 4:1-13

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together.

There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it. It was said that he would. When he ascended to the height, he captured prisoners, he gave gifts to men.

When it says, 'he ascended', what can it mean if not that he descended right down to the lower regions of the earth? The one who rose higher than all the heavens to fill all things is none other than the one who descended. And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ. In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

The Word of the Lord.

Go and teach all people my gospel.

I am with you always, until the end of the world. Matthew 28:19, 20

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK 16:15-20

Jesus showed himself to the Eleven, and said to them, "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.'

And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

The Gospel of the Lord.

REFLECTION

Jesus' return to "the right hand of God" ensures a different kind of presence in the church despite his seeming absence, one that enables us to stop "looking up to the heavens" (Acts 1:11) and to continue the healing and re-creative ministry of Jesus "to all creation". Together, please let us be praying for the meeting of the Plenary Council of the Church in Australia beginning in October, 2021.

Plenary Council Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost. Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land.

Bless and unite all your people in Australia. Guide us on the pilgrim way of the Plenary Council.

Grace us to see your face in one another and to recognise Jesus, our companion on the road.

Give us the courage to tell our stories and to speak boldly of your truth.

Give us ears to listen humbly to each other and a discerning heart to hear what you are saying.

Lead your Church into a hope-filled future, that we may live the joy of the Gospel.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord, bread for the journey from age to age. Amen.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us. St Mary MacKillop, pray for us.