

## READINGS, REFLECTION AND PRAYERS FOR THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

(from the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference Mass Readings

<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/readings/> )

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

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. "This," he said, "is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

#### *The Ascension of Jesus*

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The Word of the Lord.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 46

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

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.

*Response*

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.

*Response*

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.

*Response*

**A READING FROM THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS 1:15-18**

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The Word of the Lord.

<p>Go, make disciples of all the nations; I am with you always; yes, to the end of time. (Matthew 18:19)</p>
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**A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 28:16-20**

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

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## REFLECTION

In the ABCTV's *Anh Do's Brush With Fame*, we enjoy Anh Do's welcome, compassion and humour as he interviews celebrities while painting them in a style that resonates with us in our culture today. His style would have been culture shock for art lovers in earlier centuries. Anh Do's own childhood and family experience as a refugee on a boat escaping war-torn Vietnam suffering fear, pirate attacks, hunger, dehydration, camp internment and the loving assurance of his parents lends authenticity to his empathy in his questioning and to his portrayal in paint of his guests given their life stories. His portraits are not photographic records of his guests' facial features. His brush strokes and the colours he uses to paint their eyes, hair, skin and posture reflect symbolically the impact of his guests' experiences on him in ways we in our culture today understand.

The writers of the Scriptures communicated the truth of the Ascension of the Lord. However, it was not as a photographer might or as a historian would detail. It was in language, imagery, symbolism and implied cultural meanings which we today may find difficult to comprehend, without help. Therefore, we value the study of scripture scholars who help us in our reading of the truth and the purposes of these texts. Words and images like "forty days", "cloud" and "Mount of Olives" had cultural meanings for the original audiences for whom Luke and Matthew wrote.

The Ascension texts convey to us the Mystery of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in the glory of their utter otherness yet selflessly embracing all of creation and all of humanity with unconditional fidelity. Christ, true God and true man, reveals the path for us. Pope Francis likens Jesus the Christ to 'a roped guide' climbing a mountain who, on reaching the summit, pulls us up to him and leads us to the Father. We are safe in the hands of our Advocate.

The Ascension does not focus on Jesus' absence but tells us Christ Risen is no longer in a specific place in the world but - in the Lordship of God - is close to every person in every place and age. The apostles have seen Jesus ascend but they are not to be gazing "up to heaven", waiting for Jesus to return, or to be taken to join him. With the joy of that comes from their trust in Jesus' Promise and fidelity, they return to Jerusalem and "to the ends of the earth" to live as Jesus lived. We too are called to let Jesus live again in us – open to the initiative and action of God. Jesus shares with us the Holy Spirit who is his bond with the Father. In this way Jesus continues his mission in the world both through our living witness and also by whoever, however and whenever God inspires or chooses.

The suffering and sacrifice Anh Do experienced certainly contributed strongly to how he lives today. So too with Jesus. The Mount of Olives was where he prayed desperately in Gethsemane at the base of the Mount before his arrest and passion.

He had been welcomed there on Palm Sunday, and it was the place of his Ascension to the glory of his Father. So too with us. Every aspect of our lives is connected to who we are as disciples. The challenges we need to problem solve or accept and our joys are our personal path to God who is faithful. May we grow in our prayer and discernment listening to the Spirit and faithful to 'the roped guide' leading us.

### **PRAYER DURING THIS COVID TIME**

Jesus, Lord of all Creation,  
be present to all who are suffering because of or responding to COVID-19 crisis.

We pray for people who are infected with COVID-19 or facing quarantine...

for the peoples of the world in all their diversity and vulnerabilities...

for governmental leaders

making decisions concerning the health and economic crises...

for protection for people at higher risk of developing the disease,

including the elderly in isolation...

for medical professionals, caregivers, and researchers

responsible for fighting the new coronavirus...

for families adjusting to new ways of life...

for business owners, the unemployed and all in any kind of financial stress..

for retail workers, delivery drivers, teachers and all essential workers...

for the homeless, international students here in Australia

and all whose suffering is hidden...

for the leaders of the Church and all faith communities

supporting the anxious, the isolated and the seekers of wisdom...

for all people without faith and hope, or without anyone to pray for them...

Almighty and eternal God,

On this Festival Day, imbue us with the Spirit of Jesus

as we turn from looking heavenward

to live the mission of Jesus

caring for peoples in need in our families, communities and beyond.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.