

- We just heard the “Great Commission”...Jesus’ sending the apostles out to teach the world what He had commanded, and promising to be with them until His second coming.
- And we heard in our first reading of Ascension account in the Acts of the Apostles...that after Jesus’ resurrection He appeared to the Apostles for forty days, and then ascended bodily in to Heaven.
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- Jesus first resurrected, of course, and despite the powers He manifested thereafter, His true glory remained veiled under the appearance of ordinary and very real humanity.
- Remember how He told the doubting apostle Thomas: “*Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.*’ Thomas answered him, *‘My Lord and my God!’*” ? (John 20:27-28 RSV)
- This same Thomas would spend the rest of his life evangelizing others to Christ...until he, like all but one of the apostles, would be martyred for doing so. That’s simply history.

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- But then, after forty days, Jesus ascended into Heaven by His own power as God...not like Elijah or Enoch—or Mary—who were simply creatures taken to Heaven by God’s power.
  - And the cloud Jesus ascended upon? St. Thomas Aquinas assures us: it was not a vehicle upon which Jesus “rode”, but simply a sign of His divinity...just as a cloud appeared upon the mountain of the Transfiguration.

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- Now, Jesus’ Ascension is not simply a literary device or symbol, but an actual historic occurrence.
  - He foretold of it in a couple of places in the Gospels...especially in John 6, when Jesus asks: “*...what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?*” (Joh 6:62 RSV)...telling them in advance the proof that they would witness...again, a proof which the apostles went to their deaths testifying to.

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- Jesus ascended in order, as man, to enter into His Kingdom, to send the Holy Spirit, to intercede for us with the Father, and to prepare a place for us.
  - As we hear in the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus—the true priest of the new and eternal Covenant, “...*entered...into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.*” (Hebrews 9:24)
  - And He tells the apostles: “...*if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you...When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...* (John 16:7-13)...the Spirit Who would descend upon the apostles at Pentecost, as we’ll celebrate next weekend.
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  - His ascension was manifest to increase our faith in His divinity... and to uplift our hope, for by placing in Heaven our human nature which He assumed, He gives us the hope of also going there.
  - And, with that faith and hope, to increase our charity, knowing charity is what God desires of us, and is our path to Heaven...in love of God AND neighbor.

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- Jesus ascended bodily into Heaven, and yet also has never left us.
  - He comes to us even now...in His Body and Blood, soul and divinity, now veiled again, under the appearance of ordinary bread and wine in the Eucharist.
  - As head of the Church, He goes before us into the kingdom so that we, the members of his Body, may live in hope of one day being with Him forever...
  - ...for Jesus, in His divinity, is of the same substance (“consubstantial”) with God the Father...but also consubstantial with us in His humanity.
  - And both Peter and Paul describe Jesus as the “firstborn from the dead”...and as He the “first-ascended” into Heaven, His faithful disciples are will follow.

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- Paul writes the Thessalonians about this...that at Jesus' second coming: "*...the Lord himself will descend from heaven... And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds [again, the sign of His divinity] to meet the Lord...and so we shall always be with the Lord.*" (1Th 4:15-17)
- This is our ultimate hope AS disciples of Christ...to ascend to God and be with Him forever.

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- Too much to believe!...many say. Ridiculous, imaginative, mythological wishful thinking, the world tells us.
  - But, again, we remember the apostles' witness...even to their own deaths, having gained nothing but persecution and suffering for their pains.
  - As St. John writes: "*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you...*" (1John 1:1-3 RSV)
  - We remember St. Paul's own miraculous conversion. We remember prophecies fulfilled, and all the miracles certified by the Church from then ongoing until and through our present day.
  - All of these attest to the veracity—the truth, the reality—of what we believe.

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- Jesus says "*...I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you also may be.*" (John 14:3 )
  - So...if we truly love our neighbor, let us always seek to bring him or her to Christ...for salvation is God's own promised gift to those who love Him, and therefore leading others to Christ is the greatest charity of all.

**Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord****Reading 1 ACTS 1:1-11**

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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 PS 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9**

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

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

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.**

or:

R. **Alleluia.**

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.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

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.**

or:

**R. Alleluia.**

### **Reading 2 EPH 1:17-23**

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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.

### **Or HEB 9:24-28; 10:19-23**

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Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands,  
 a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,  
 that he might now appear before God on our behalf.  
 Not that he might offer himself repeatedly,  
 as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary  
 with blood that is not his own;  
 if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly

from the foundation of the world.

But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages

to take away sin by his sacrifice.

Just as it is appointed that men and women die once,

and after this the judgment, so also Christ,

offered once to take away the sins of many,

will appear a second time, not to take away sin

but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since through the blood of Jesus

we have confidence of entrance into the sanctuary

by the new and living way he opened for us through the veil,

that is, his flesh,

and since we have a great priest over the house of God, “

let us approach with a sincere heart and in absolute trust,

with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience

and our bodies washed in pure water.

Let us hold unwaveringly to our confession that gives us hope,

for he who made the promise is trustworthy.

#### Alleluia **MT 28:19A, 20B**

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R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Go and teach all nations, says the Lord;

I am with you always, until the end of the world.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

#### Gospel **LK 24:46-53**

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Jesus said to his disciples:

“Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer

and rise from the dead on the third day

and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins,

would be preached in his name

to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

You are witnesses of these things.

And behold I am sending the promise of my Father upon you;

but stay in the city

until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany,

raised his hands, and blessed them.

As he blessed them he parted from them

and was taken up to heaven.

They did him homage

and then returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

and they were continually in the temple praising God.