

7th Sunday of Easter (Year A)

Jesus says that the hour has come for him to glorify the Father. He prays for those who have kept God's word and so belong to God. He prays for their protection in the world as he leaves it, and that they may be one.

Welcome

Today we continue to reflect on Jesus' return to heaven on Ascension Day and now spend each day preparing for outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel we hear Jesus' words of farewell to his disciples and hear again about his ascension to heaven in the book of Acts. Let us now commit to deepening our understanding of what it means to say goodbye, and learn how saying goodbye is part of God's plan for each one of us.

The Greeting

We each light our candle at home, a reminder that God is with us now and always.

We worship together in the name of the Father, and of the + Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Alleluia. Christ is risen.

He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Opening Activity



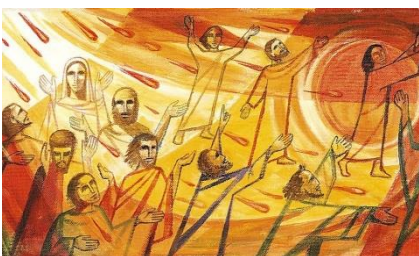
This rather unassuming building is a small chapel on top of the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem. It marks the place where Jesus is said to have ascended into heaven.



This picture is taken from the centre of the chapel, the stone in the rectangle frame is said to bear the mark of a footprint in the stone, this is said to be the last footprint of Jesus here on earth.



The ascension is a difficult concept. Many of us struggle with the idea of Jesus floating up into the sky. We certainly don't understand heaven as a place above us, beyond the stars. But somehow, Jesus left his disciples, so they could get on with the task of spreading the Good News of Jesus.



We know that the early Christians discovered that whilst Jesus was no longer physically present with them, they knew that he was very close spiritually. This knowledge gave them the ability to talk about Jesus and what he had said and done with renewed vigour and determination.

Opening Prayer

We begin our worship today, as we say:

Lord of all glory, we come before you
seeking your wisdom,
that we may glorify you through our thinking;

seeking your love,
that we may glorify you through our emotions;

seeking your strength,
that we may glorify you at all times;

seeking your perseverance,
that we may glorify you in all places.

Show us how to live,
that our lives shine with your glory,

and those who encounter us
may know you and your work in our world. Amen.

The Penitential Rite

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God promises to put a new heart and a new spirit within us. Let us prepare to receive these gifts by confessing to our shortcomings and wrongdoing.

When our actions are not loving,
and we think of just ourselves –
your name is not glorified.

Forgive us, God of Glory.

When our words bring hurt to others
and we do not even notice –
your name is not glorified.

Forgive us, God of Glory.

When the way we live is selfish
and we find no time for you –
your name is not glorified.

Forgive us, God of Glory.

When we do not see you or reveal your love –
your name is not glorified.

Forgive us, God of Glory.

Forgive and renew us,
and let your glory be seen in our lives.

May almighty God have mercy on us, + forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

A prayer of praise and adoration

God of majesty and might,
your glory shines throughout the universe:

from the highest heaven to the deepest sea;
in all the creatures you have made;

in everything you have created;
in the seasons that shape our living.

Your glory shines through who you are,
and through what you do.

The power of your glory
touches your creation and exalts it.

To you we offer our worship;
to you we offer our praise;

before you we come in adoration;
surrendering ourselves to you,
our maker and redeemer. Amen.

The Collect

Risen, ascended Lord,
as we rejoice at your triumph,
fill your Church on earth with power and compassion,
that all who are estranged by sin
may find forgiveness and know your peace,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

First Reading

Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus again promises the disciples that they will receive the power of the Holy Spirit and be his witnesses “to the ends of the earth”.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles *(1:6-14)*

When the apostles had come together, they asked Jesus, ‘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 towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards 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.’

Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

The Gospel:

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ + according to St John (17:1-11)

Glory to you, O Lord

Jesus looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

'I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, O Christ

Address/Reflection

Every life is full of goodbyes in varying degrees – from saying “goodbye” to someone who has served or helped us in some way, to the pain of losing someone or something that has given meaning and value to our life. It could be saying goodbye to a loved one, a pet or a precious object, to familiar surroundings, or to our youth as we grow older.

The musician and writer Nick Cave and his wife, Susie Bick, lost their fifteen-year-old son Arthur in a tragic accident in 2015. When, in 2019, someone asked him, “How do we say goodbye?”, he responded by writing:

... to say goodbye is an act of appreciation for the past that we have moved beyond, and a prelude to the new you that will, in time, require its own goodbye, and as you continue to grow, further goodbyes, each a rehearsal for the final, most precious goodbye of all.

In today’s Gospel reading we find Jesus saying goodbye to his disciples. It is part of the Upper Room Discourse, which spans chapters thirteen to seventeen of John’s Gospel. This is an intense and intimate time that Jesus spends with his disciples, teaching about service, love, heaven and prayer. He spells out his impending departure and prepares them for life without him. Within the Upper Room Discourse, today’s passage forms part of what is known as the High Priestly Prayer – and indeed Jesus’ tone is reminiscent of a priest interceding for a congregation in their presence.

There is no prayer in the garden of Gethsemane in John’s account, so this is Jesus’ final prayer before his crucifixion. Afterwards, they will go to Gethsemane where he will be arrested and the events of the passion will quickly unfold. So this passage marks the transition between the Upper Room Discourse and Jesus’ passion.

It opens with a reference to “these words” which Jesus has just spoken. These are words addressed his disciples, ending with Jesus’ astonishing assertion: “Take courage; I have conquered the world!” Now, in chapter seventeen, he addresses God directly as “Father”, and prays for himself, asking God to glorify him, and then prays for the disciples.

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How different is the goodbye that we heard in today's reading from Acts. The resurrected Jesus' last words before he ascends to be with his Father are full of hope and the promise of the Holy Spirit: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth".

Saying goodbye is often melancholy, and sometimes the pain of separation is beyond words. We may feel as though we have been ripped, both emotionally and physically, from that which we love. We may feel as though the life has been drained from us. Yet, for all the heartbreak, each goodbye contains within it a new relationship with God. Jesus' closing words today are all about unity: "protect them... so that they may be one, as we are one". Similarly, Jesus' ascension, although it is a separation, is a reunion with the Father.

The prophet Ezekiel knew the pain of separation and loss. He was one of those living in exile after Nebuchadnezzar exiled three thousand Jews from Judah, holding them in captivity in Babylonia. For all the upheaval and turbulence he lived through, Ezekiel's faith was strong enough for him to be able to write the inspiring words we heard in our first reading. This beautiful verse speaks of God's eternal, unfaltering promise of new life and resurrection: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh".

On the last Sunday of Easter our focus remains on resurrection and new life. As we look forward to the arrival of the Holy Spirit, blazing with fiery vitality, next week at Pentecost, it is fitting at this time to meditate on saying goodbye, drawing from our scripture readings a deep understanding of God's promise of life, even in the midst of loss. Because, though goodbyes can be painful, we can rejoice that those we have loved and lost have been united with their heavenly Father, and joyfully anticipate our own reunion with God and with all those who have gone before us.

Profession of Faith

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again 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.

We 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 worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Intercessions

Blessed are you, Lord our God, you have raised your Son from the darkness of death to the fullness of life eternal, to your right hand on high. By his death he has destroyed death; by his rising to life again he has restored us to eternal life; by his ascension he has opened for us the gate of glory.

As we rejoice in the ascension of Jesus, we give thanks for men and women of vision, for those who have shared their faith with us. We remember all whose lives are clouded by doubt or despair. We pray for those who feel life is dull, that they may come to know the joy of the presence of the ascended Lord.

Lord, empower your Church to proclaim the Good News of your saving acts.

Lord, you are always with us, **hear us and help us.**

As we rejoice in your presence, we remember all who feel lonely and neglected. We ask your blessing on all who are oppressed and those who are struggling to survive. We pray for all who are caught up in violence and war, and for those not at peace with each other, with themselves and with you.

Lord, you are always with us, **hear us and help us.**

As we rejoice in your love, we remember our loved ones, our homes and families. We pray for our community and neighbourhood. We ask your blessing on all who strive to brighten the world by their dedication and goodness, by their faith and willingness to sacrifice.

Lord, you are always with us, **hear us and help us.**

As we rejoice in your power, we remember all whose powers are waning, the elderly and the infirm and all who are disabled. We ask your blessings upon all who are ill or who have been injured in accidents or acts of violence. May they find courage and hope in you and your abiding love.

Lord, you are always with us, **hear us and help us.**

We rejoice that you are our great High Priest who ascended into heaven, and that you are at the right hand of God making intercession for us. May our loved one departed and all your faithful people rejoice in you and rest in the glory of your kingdom.

Lord, you are always with us, **hear us and help us.**

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

The Peace - *Receiving God's peace through prayer*

God has made us one in Christ.

He has set his seal upon us and, as a pledge of what is to come,
has given the Spirit to dwell in our hearts. Alleluia.

cf 2 Corinthians 1.22

The peace of the Lord be always with you:
and also with you.

As we receive the peace of Christ on this day, let us pause and reflect together on
where we see God's glory around us:

Where have I seen God's glory this week?
In creation? In activity? In other people?

How do I react to God's glory?
How do I want to react?
How do I feel about being in the midst of the glory of God?
How can I help that glory shine through?

Unite us in your glory, loving Lord,
that you may be more clearly seen in your world.

The Eucharistic Prayer (B)

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

For he is our great high priest
who has entered once for all
into the heavenly sanctuary,
evermore to pour upon your Church
the grace and comfort of your Holy Spirit.

He is the one who has gone before us,
who calls us to be united in prayer
as were his disciples in the upper room
while they awaited his promised gift,
the life-giving Spirit of Pentecost.

Therefore all creation yearns with eager longing
as angels and archangels sing the endless hymn of praise:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord, you are holy indeed,
the source of all holiness;
grant that by the power of your Holy Spirit,
and according to your holy will,
these gifts of bread and wine
may be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ:
who, in the same night that he was betrayed,
took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying: Drink this, all of you;
This is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

Jesus Christ is Lord:
**Lord, by your cross and resurrection
you have set us free.
You are the Saviour of the world**

And so Father, calling to mind his death on the cross,
his perfect sacrifice made once for the sins of the whole world;
rejoicing in his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming in glory,
we celebrate this memorial of our redemption.
As we offer you this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving,
we bring before you this bread and this cup
and we thank you for counting us worthy
to stand in your presence and serve you.

Send the Holy Spirit on your people
and gather into one in your kingdom
all who share this one bread and one cup,
so that we, in the company of [N and] all the saints,
may praise and glorify you for ever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord;

by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As the risen and ascended Lord Jesus has commanded, so we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ:

Though we are many, we are one body, because we all share in one bread.

Agnus Dei

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.**

Holy Communion

Alleluia. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

Therefore let us keep the feast. Alleluia.

Spiritual Communion

There are times when people are unable to receive the Body and Blood of Christ. Even when we cannot receive Holy Communion, all are united as the Body of Christ. This prayer helps us to receive Christ spiritually and to know that he is with us at all times.

**My Jesus,
I believe that you are present in the Holy Sacrament of the altar.
I love you above all things
and I passionately desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally,
come spiritually into my soul
so that I may unite myself wholly to you now and forever. Amen.**

Meditative Prayer

You are not only risen and alive, you are Lord.
This is your ascension, your ascendancy over the whole universe.
You stand over and above all that is best in life as its source.
You stand above all that is worst as ultimate victor.
You stand above all powers and authorities as judge.
You stand above all failure and weakness and sin as forgiveness and love.
You alone are worthy of total allegiance, total commitment.
You are Lord 'My Lord and my God'

Written by Rex Chapman.

Post Communion Prayer

Let us pray:

**Eternal God,
giver of love and power,
your Son Jesus Christ
has sent us into all the world
to preach the gospel of his kingdom:
confirm us in this mission,
and help us to live the good news we proclaim;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Blessing and Dismissal

May the Father protect you and those you love.
May the Son guide you throughout your life.
May the Holy Spirit comfort you in times of pain and separation.
And may we be one, as they are one.
And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Waiting expectantly for the promised Holy Spirit, pray continually as you await the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit. Alleluia, alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.