



Movement and Horizon

The Ascension of the Lord is both a movement and a horizon. Movement, because it tells of the return of the Risen Christ to the Father. Horizon, because it tells of the destiny of all human beings: "I go to prepare a place for you... so that where I am, you may be also" (John 14:2-3). The Ascension, therefore, is not just a curious addition to the story of Jesus but is the movement through which, and horizon into which, God is drawing the whole of creation. Jesus ascends not simply in his individual humanity. To put it colloquially, it's not a case of "Cheers, folks, I'm out of here!" On the contrary, by his Ascension he embodies all of humanity perfected and transformed. It is an "open-ended" mystery as its consequences gradually embrace one generation after the next of fragile and sinful human beings.

On the day of the Ascension, the first disciples were left staring up into the sky. But they had to become grounded again; come "down to earth", as it were, and start understanding that Christ's Ascension was just the ending of a previous mode of being and the beginning of a new one. Christ's incarnation is no longer just earthly now – it's cosmic. It is all-embracing. We can no longer box Christ into neat human categories. His invisibility makes quite clear that not even the Church can possess, control or contain Christ. In fact, it's the other way round. The Church is contained in him. Christ is not lurking somewhere "in" the sacraments, just as the Ascension reminds us that he is not "in" the world. Rather, earthly elements like bread and

wine, oil and water are now "in Christ". The sacraments are the closest encounter we can possibly have with the Risen and Ascended Christ.



Through his Ascension, Christ rises above history. This does not mean flight from history. Rather, it gives history a new destiny and direction. Human history is now not simply biological time (just look at the effects of ageing!), but the graced time of an ever-broadening realisation of our true selves as members of the Body of Christ. The Ascension of Christ re-calibrates our inner "GPS" – our true destiny – and shows the Way. Yes, Jesus

himself is that "Way". Our true destiny is to share in the interpersonal communion which exists between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit gradually leading us there. At the heart of our faith is the consciousness that Jesus is the goal, the end of time. Jesus, by ascending to the Father is more perfectly present in each moment, in each "now", than he could ever have been during his earthly life. Saint Paul captures the significance of the Ascension for those of us still on earthly pilgrimage:

So, if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on the things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your true life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you will be revealed with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1-4)



SUNDAY MASS



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.

FIRST READING: Acts 1:1-11.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Psalm 47.

RESPONSE:

God has gone up with shouts of joy. The Lord goes up with trumpet blast.

- All peoples, clap your hands.
Cry to God with shouts of joy!
For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome,
the 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 reigns over the nations.
God sits upon his holy throne. **R**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:17-23.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia. Go and make disciples of all nations, says the Lord; I am with you always, to the close of the age. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: Matthew 28:16-20.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

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

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 25 May (St Bede the Venerable, PrD)

Acts 19:1-8; Psalm 68; John 16:29-33

God calls us to more than personal devotion: God calls us to be Church, to be part of the whole, to be more when we are together in Christ than any of us can be when we are alone.

Tue 26 May St Philip Neri, Pr

Acts 20:17-27; Psalm 68; John 17:1-11

Like Paul, many today sense the Spirit urging them to take a path in life that affects the lives of those who love them. Let us pray for strength and safety for all who follow where the Spirit leads them.

Wed 27 May (St Augustine of Canterbury, B)

Acts 20:28-38; Psalm 68; John 17:11-19

Partings are always painful. In this unique time between Ascension and Pentecost we experience the tension of presence-in-absence, and the longing for what God has not yet given.

Thu 28 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 22:30; 23:6-11; Psalm 16; John 17:20-26

Today's Gospel reading tells us that we are gifts to Jesus. Yes, believe it! Each of us is a special blessing to Jesus. Living as if we believe this is one way of showing what it means to be a Christian.

Fri 29 May (Bl. Joseph Gerard, Pr)

Acts 25:13-21; Psalm 103; John 21:15-19

This is what life is all about – Love! It is not about great drama, or accomplishments, or heroism – for these are things of the ego. Love Jesus, and listen with new ears as you hear his call to follow him.

Sat 30 May Liturgy of the Day

Acts 28:16-20.30-31; Psalm 11; John 21:20-25

It is good that we help others less fortunate than ourselves. But God does not bless us for the many good things we do for others. God blesses us for the love with which we do these things.

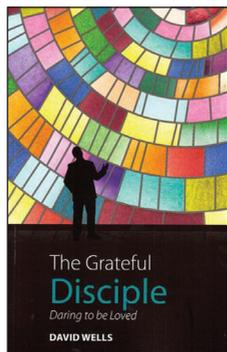
Sun 31 May PENTECOST

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104; John 20:19-23

Without the Holy Spirit we tend to err on the side of being overly cautious about what God desires of us. Pentecost invites us to throw caution to the wind, so to speak, inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives.

(KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial) Pr=Priest; D=Doctor; B=Bishop)

Following on from his popular first book, *The Reluctant Disciple*, Wells offers more thought-provoking and inspirational insights into scripture, based on his own experience. With self-deprecating humour, David draws on his life as a teacher, speaker and family man to engage the reader in this his journey.



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