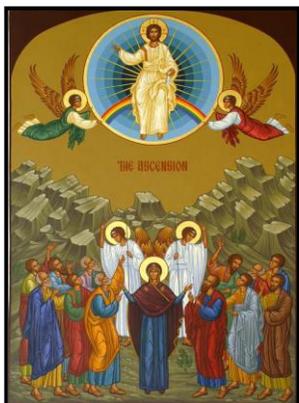


“God mounts the throne amid shouts of joy, the Lord amid trumpet blasts.”



By the hand of Father Luke Dingman,
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The Feast of the Ascension

The Feast of the Ascension of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after the Great and Holy Feast of Pascha (Easter). Since the date of Pascha changes each year, the date of the Feast of the Ascension changes, but it is always celebrated on a Thursday.

The Ascension was the final Resurrection appearance to the Disciples and Mary, the Mother of God, and it marked a new beginning in all their lives.

The Feast itself commemorates when, on the fortieth day after His Resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives. After blessing them and asking them to wait for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, "He was lifted up before their eyes in a cloud which took Him from their sight".

The Feast is a celebration of the return of our Redeemer to Heaven. It is a day of victory for our Lord, a day of triumph that He fully merited. Christ left the throne of His Father, humbled Himself in the womb of the Virgin, lay in Bethlehem in a rough stable, fled from His own people into Egypt and spent years in Nazareth as a common labourer. Tirelessly He searched for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His own brethren repaid Him with nothing but unkindness and misunderstanding. Then, beginning on the Mount of Olives and ending on Golgotha, He patiently paid the price of our redemption. All this He did because He loved us, because He sought to free us from Satan's power. This work is now complete. He returns to heaven as a conqueror. The Son stands before the Father by whom He was sent and whose will He so perfectly performed.

Why did Jesus go away when there was so much He could have done here on earth? The answer is given by Jesus Himself. He tells us that his human form will be replaced by the presence of the Holy Spirit who will bring us into much closer contact with Jesus than his human form could bring about. If Jesus remained on earth, we could never have gotten any closer to Him than the touch of a hand, an embrace, or the sound of a voice, which is far below the intimacy that God wants with the soul or the soul desires of God.

By Jesus' ascension, He is able to come and abide in each one of us in all His fullness so that His mind would be our mind and His life our life. Is it not the Holy Spirit, who affects the change of the bread and wine in the liturgy and thus brings Christ to us in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist? And by receiving Christ in this sacrament He comes to fill our life with His presence. Now that Christ abides in us all, He gives us a very special challenge: to glorify Him in the world today through our lives – to become visible Christs, living and working as His agents.

It was a great day for the Church when a cloud received Jesus out of the sight of the apostles and he ascended into heaven. It will be an even greater day when the same ascended Jesus returns in glory. In the meantime between Ascension and the Second Coming, there is no vacuum, for Christ is with us through His Church. Through prayer, his words, and the sacraments we can experience his ascension as well as the power and glory of his presence. In fact, prayer is exactly that: an ascension to God!

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