

# Read

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:19-23  
or Ephesians 1:17-23

Luke 24:46-53

# LIVING THE WORD

## Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

May 26 or 29, 2022

### REFLECTION

Jesus left—and the disciples were filled with joy. Why? Who celebrates leaving?

It's the season of graduations. Friends head off to college or the workforce. The joy of accomplishment fills the air, but so does grief. When someone I care about leaves, I usually feel sad. The relationship as we know it changes. There is no more physical proximity. Questions arise: Will we still be close? Will the relationship last?

The disciples grieved Jesus' death, and their initial reaction when he came back was fear. But when he left—or rather, ascended—this time, they felt joy. How? They believed and trusted that this was not the end of the story. Jesus said he was sending the Holy Spirit upon the disciples, exactly as his Father promised. The Holy Spirit would be theirs to guide and inspire the next steps.

Jesus affirms a comforting truth of our faith: God will give us who we need. Jesus' ascension changed his relationship with his disciples, yes. But it did not end it; rather, the ascension sparked a new chapter of their call. Ignited by the Holy Spirit, the disciples—and all of us—continue the work of Jesus in the world.

### QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Who have you had to say goodbye to recently?
- ❖ How do you maintain relationships after a big change?

### ACTION

The season of graduations is upon us! No matter your year in school, it's very likely that someone you respect is moving on to a new adventure. Perhaps it's a teammate you look up to, a sibling, or a dear friend. In the spirit of Christ's ascension and promise of presence, write a note to this person. Tell them what they mean to you and how they have affected your life.



**What's your favorite graduation / saying goodbye song? Share your pick on social media and dedicate it to your friends who are graduating this year!**



May 26 or 29, 2022

# SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

## LECTIONARY #58C

Acts 1:1-11

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Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:19-23 or

Ephesians 1:17-23

Luke 24:46-53

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

During his ministry Jesus frequently told the disciples about his salvific mission, though the disciples didn't understand him. Jesus continued teaching his disciples even to the end of his time on earth, and by the time of the ascension, the disciples had heard and witnessed the truth of Jesus' identity and mission. This was important because at the end of his time on earth, Jesus commissioned his disciples to carry on his mission and share the news of his salvation with others. With Jesus in heaven, the Holy Spirit was sent to be the disciples' guide as they carried out Jesus' mission. The Holy Spirit still guides us today. At the end of the Gospel reading, the disciples responded in tremendous joy. We too are called to respond in joy to God's call and Jesus' mission for us.

**Q FOCUS:** *Jesus does not leave us alone as he sends us out to carry on his mission.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

In most dioceses the Solemnity of the Ascension is celebrated on the Seventh Sunday of Easter, and in other places the solemnity takes place on the Thursday between the sixth and seventh Sundays in Easter. Traditionally, it has been observed on the fortieth day of Easter Time (see Acts 1:3); hence its observance on a Thursday. One reason bishops

decided to change the day of its observation was so that more people could participate in the Mass for this great solemnity. It is an important part of our faith tradition, because through the ascension, Jesus completed his work of salvation on earth and prepared our way to return to God.

### Church Teaching Connection

"[T]he Ascension does not point to Jesus' absence, but tells us that he is alive in our midst in a new way. He is no longer in a specific place in the world as he was before the Ascension. He is now in the lordship of God, present in every space and time, close to each one of us. . . . We have with us a multitude of brothers and sisters who, in silence and concealment, in their family life and at work, in their problems and hardships, in their joys and hopes, live faith daily and together with us bring the world the lordship of God's love, in the Risen Jesus Christ, ascended into Heaven, our own Advocate who pleads for us" (Pope Francis, General Audience, April 17, 2013).

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel

Luke 24:46-53

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:*

During his ministry, Jesus told the disciples in many ways about how he would die and rise again. We hear him say that the temple will be destroyed and rebuilt in three days. We hear about the Son of Man and how he must die. Still, the disciples appear confused and scared at Jesus' death and resurrection in those days after the first Easter. They were confused because they didn't yet understand what Jesus meant by his words. In today's reading we hear about Jesus telling the disciples the story of the Christ, the anointed one of God.

► **Think back to when you first learned about the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection, or think about how this would sound to someone who didn't know anything about Christianity. Why would this idea of suffering, death, and resurrection be hard to understand?**

In teaching about his mission, Jesus reminds the disciples about the suffering the Christ would

experience. They hear about Jesus' death and resurrection, and about the forgiveness of sins. Importantly, they learn their role in this love story between God and humanity. The disciples are the witnesses to Jesus Christ and his redemptive mission, preaching, and action. It is these people who will take Jesus' message and make it known to the world. Because the disciples heard and obeyed Jesus' message, we know today who Jesus is, and we have hope in salvation.

In today's reading we find the disciples confident and joyful, which is a sharp contrast to the Gospel stories in which the disciples were confused or unsure of what Jesus meant when preaching about his resurrection. Instead of confusion, we find the apostles taking joy in Jesus' final day on earth, and we see them ready to take on their masters' work as he departed the earth for heaven.

Before the disciples would take Jesus' message to the world, they needed God's presence with them. Jesus could not stay with them physically forever. Even though he overcame death through the resurrection, his place was no longer to live on earth among human beings as one of them. In order to complete his work of salvation, Jesus ascended to heaven to prepare our way to the Father, which we hear about at the end of today's Gospel passage. We celebrate the ascension because it is the completion of Christ's work of our salvation until he comes again at the end of time.

► **Why do you think the disciples needed God's presence to take up Christ's work on earth?**

Jesus instructed his disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high." In this passage, Jesus was talking about the Holy Spirit—the third person of the Trinity would go to Jesus' disciples and he would guide them as they continued Christ's work on earth. It is the Holy Spirit who stays with Christ's Church still; who guided the Church as the canon of Scripture was formed. It is the Spirit who guides the councils of the Church as they pronounce teachings about Jesus, and about God's relationship with humankind. The Holy Spirit is with each of us, too. Every person baptized into the Church is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When Jesus ascended into heaven, he did not leave us to continue his work on our own. We are not left confused or guessing as to

what we should do next. In his great love for us, God sends the Holy Spirit to remain with us. This is the promise of the Christ's ascension, that he has accomplished the work of salvation and supports us as we share its Good News with others.

## Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the "Church Teaching Connection" on page 192.

Jesus did not remain on earth, but ascended to the Father to complete the work of salvation and prepare our way to God. Jesus' disciples would continue his mission work on earth.

The Holy Spirit was sent to guide the Church in her mission of proclaiming Christ.

## Act on the Word

### Learning about God through Song

For this activity, you will need to borrow enough hymnals from your parish that the young people can use them in this reflection activity. You will also need pens and paper.

This activity is similar to the activity for Easter Sunday. It leads the teens to a deeper understanding of who God is by reflecting on hymns. Since the early days of our faith tradition, the Church has recognized an important relationship between the way we pray and what we believe. This relationship is referred to by the Latin phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* meaning that the law of prayer (*orandi*) is the foundation for the law of belief (*credendi*). The reverse is also true; our rituals and prayers inform our belief, and our belief helps to structure our rituals and prayers. The songs we sing at Mass are prayers, and those songs are a reflection of our beliefs.

Divide the teens into small groups and distribute the hymnals, paper, and pens. Using the headings or the index in the hymnal, have the young people find songs for the Ascension and/or about the Holy Spirit. Have each group pick one or two songs to reflect on. Use the following questions to help the

teens reflect on the meaning of these songs and the way they articulate our beliefs.

- \* What descriptive language is used in this song?
- \* How is the Holy Spirit described or depicted?
- \* What relationship do you see illustrated between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in this song?
- \* What does this song tell us about the nature of God?
- \* What does this song tell us about God's love?
- \* What theology can you understand as a result of the song?
- \* When you listen to the song, how do you feel?
- \* When you listen to the song, what do you think?
- \* If you were to write a song about Jesus' ascension, what would you want included in the song?

Have the groups come back together as a large and have them share their reflections.

### Closing Prayer

God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
Jesus ascended and returned to you,  
not to distance himself from us  
but to help us believe that where he has  
gone, we might follow.  
Fill us with your Spirit,  
that every people might exult in your name.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity  
of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

### For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.itp.org/lwgr](http://www.itp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.