

The Ascension of the Lord (A)

Gospel text (Mt 28:16-20): The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them... Then Jesus approached and said to them, "... I am with you always, until the end of the age."

The Ascension: Christ receives the heavenly homage

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Today, we contemplate that before the resurrected body of Jesus ascended to heaven he commanded the church to continue with His mission in the world: He told His church to proclaim the gospels, teach people, and baptize new followers.

Christ returns to the glory of God and ceases to be visible in His physical form. After having lived among us and sacrificed Himself lovingly for our salvation, Jesus Christ is now "seated" at the right hand of the Father: Heaven adores Him and the Father accepts the sacrifice offered for our salvation. Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end. In the intervening time He will not abandon us, but that the Holy Spirit is now and always will be with us until the end of the world.

—I adore you Father, because in Christ you give us life and grace. We ask you that we maybe worthy to participate in the glory that your Son has in fullness.

In the Ascension of Jesus, his "leaving" is a "coming", a new way of closeness

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(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today, the Jesus who says goodbye is not going somewhere on a distant star. He enters into the communion of life and power with the living God, in the situation of superiority of God over all space. That is why "he has not left", but, by virtue of the same power of God, he is now always present with us and for us.

In John's Gospel farewell speeches, Jesus says precisely this to his disciples: "I am going away, but I am coming to you". The Jesus' "leaving", which is at the same time his "coming", is wonderfully synthesized, and with this the mystery about the cross, the resurrection and the ascension is also explained. Thus, his "going away" is precisely a "coming", a new mode of closeness, of permanent presence, which John also puts in relation to the joy mentioned in Luke's Gospel.

—He is not in just one place in this moment, but He is present next to everyone, and everyone can invoke him anywhere and throughout history.

The Ascension: Jesus, together with the Father, always sees and hears us

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Today, Jesus is next to the Father, not far, but close to us. There is a very beautiful little story in the Gospel (cf. Mk 6,45-52), in which Jesus anticipates this mode of closeness during his earthly life.

After the multiplication of the loaves, the Lord commands the disciples to get into the boat, while He dismisses the crowd. Then he went up on a mountainside to pray. Therefore, the disciples are alone in the boat. They have the wind against them, the sea is rough. They are threatened by the force of the waves and the storm. The Lord seems far away, praying on the mount. But since he is close to the Father, He sees them. And because He sees them, he comes towards them walking on the water, he gets on the boat with them and makes possible the journey to their destination.

—This is an image for the time of the Church. The Lord is "up on a mountainside" of the Father. That is why he sees us and can get into the boat of our life at any time. We can always invoke Him, being sure that He always sees us and always hears us!