



What's What

A weekly communication that provides an opportunity for our faith community to grow together in faith.

Ascension Thursday

The fortieth day after Easter Sunday, commemorating the Ascension of Christ into heaven, according to Mark 16:19, Luke 24:51, and Acts 1:2.

In the Eastern Church this feast was known as *analepsis*, the taking up, and also as the *episozomene*, the salvation, denoting that by ascending into His glory Christ completed the work of our redemption. The terms used in the West, *ascensio* and, occasionally, *ascensa*, signify that Christ was raised up by His own powers. Tradition designates Mount Olivet near Bethany as the place where Christ left the earth. The feast falls on Thursday. It is one of the Ecumenical feasts ranking with the feasts of the Passion, of Easter and of Pentecost among the most solemn in the calendar, has a vigil and, since the fifteenth century, an octave which is set apart for a novena of preparation for Pentecost, in accordance with the directions of Leo XIII.

History

The observance of this feast is of great antiquity. Although no documentary evidence of it exists prior to the beginning of the fifth century, St. Augustine says that it is of Apostolic origin, and he speaks of it in a way that shows it was the universal observance of the Church long before his time. Frequent mention of it is made in the writings of St. John Chrysostom, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and in the Constitution of the

Apostles. The Pilgrimage of Sylvia (*Peregrinatio Etheriae*) speaks of the vigil of this feast and of the feast itself, as they were kept in the church built over the grotto in Bethlehem in which Christ was born (Duchesne, *Christian Worship*, 491-515). It may be that prior to the fifth century the fact narrated in the Gospels was commemorated in conjunction with the feast of Easter or Pentecost. Some believe that the much-disputed forty-third decree of the Council of Elvira (c. 300) condemning the practice of observing a feast on the fortieth day after Easter and neglecting to keep Pentecost on the fiftieth day, implies that the proper usage of the time was to commemorate the Ascension along with Pentecost. Representations of the mystery are found in diptychs and frescoes dating as early as the fifth century.

Historical Traditions

Certain customs were connected with the liturgy of this feast, such as the blessing of beans and grapes after the Commemoration of the Dead in the Canon of the Mass, the blessing of first fruits, afterwards done on Rogation Days, the blessing of a candle, the wearing of mitres by deacon and subdeacon, the extinction of the paschal candle, and triumphal processions with torches and banners outside the churches to commemorate the entry of Christ into heaven. Rock records the English custom of carrying at the head of the

procession the banner bearing the device of the lion and at the foot the banner of the dragon, to symbolize the triumph of Christ in His ascension over the evil one. In some churches the scene of the Ascension was vividly reproduced by elevating the figure of Christ above the altar through an opening in the roof of the church. In others, whilst the figure of Christ was made to ascend, that of the devil was made to descend.

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Ascension Thursday
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In the liturgies generally the day is meant to celebrate the completion of the work of our salvation, the pledge of our glorification with Christ, and His entry into heaven with our human nature glorified.

From: www.newadvent.org/cathen/01767b.htm

Ascension of the Lord Eucharistic Preface

Let us lift up our hearts.

..... ***We lift them to the Lord.***

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

..... ***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***

It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God, for you have called us to a rich hope and a glorious inheritance among the saints.

You fixed the world in place and rule over all from your sacred throne. You formed a people for yourself and through Moses and the prophets you spoke to them of the Christ who fills all in all.

As it was written, he suffered and was killed, but you raised him from the dead and he walked again with his chosen ones, speaking to them of your glorious kingdom. You carried him into heaven on the clouds and made him head over all things for the church, seating him at your right hand far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

Therefore with



Homily from Pope St. Leo I (the Great) Ascend With Jesus

Christ's ascension marked the exaltation of our human nature. We saw ourselves divinized when our nature rose to glory in the person of Jesus.

Amidst these miracles, when the disciples were troubled by anxieties, the Lord appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:26). So that what was passing through their hearts might not remain. For they thought they saw a ghost, but He showed that their thoughts were wrong. He showed their doubting eyes the marks of the cross still in His hands and feet, and invited them to touch Him with careful scrutiny. For the traces of the nails and spear had been kept in order to heal the wounds of unbelieving hearts. Thus, not with wavering faith, but with steadfast knowledge, they might understand that the nature that had lain in the tomb was soon to sit on God the Father's throne.

So, dearly beloved, throughout this time that passed between the Lord's resurrection and ascension, God's providence had this in mind, taught this, and impressed it upon both the eyes and hearts of His people: that the Lord Jesus Christ might be recognized as truly risen, just as He was truly born, truly suffered, and truly died. That's why the blessed Apostles and all the disciples — fearful as they had been at His death on the cross, and hesitant in believing His Resurrection — were so strengthened by the clear truth that, when the Lord entered the heights of heaven, not only were they untouched by sadness, but were even filled with great joy.

The cause of their rejoicing was truly great and indescribable when, in the sight of the heavenly multitude, our human nature ascended above the dignity of all heavenly creatures, passing the ranks of the angels and rising beyond the archangels'

heights. This ascension was unlimited by any elevation, till our nature was received to sit with the Eternal Father, joined to the throne of His glory, as His divine nature was joined to human nature in the Son.

Since then, Christ's ascension is our exaltation. For there is hope that the body will be raised to the glory where the head has gone before. So, dearly beloved, let us rejoice with delight in our holy thanksgiving. For on the day of the ascension we have not only been confirmed as possessors of paradise, but in Christ we have even pierced through to the heights of heaven. We have gained much greater things through Christ's indescribable grace than we had lost through the devil's malice. Those whom our raging enemy had driven away from the bliss of our first home, the Son of God has made members of Himself and placed at the right hand of the Father, with whom He lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.



HAPPY ASCENSION DAY!

Connections to Doctrine & Tradition

- Jesus's and the Holy Spirit's mission is accomplished in us (CCC 737, 778)
- We are to announce, bear witness to, make present, and spread the mystery of the Trinity (CCC 748-975)
- We pause between our celebrations of the Ascension and Pentecost to contemplate our task. The Church's mission is twofold: we are called to continuous conversion, and we are called to bear the Gospel for salvation to all the world (NDC 10; CCC 767-769)

CCC: Catechism of the Catholic Church; NDC: National Directory of Catechesis. These documents can be found online at www.vatican.va or at www.usccb.org.

"What's What" is a publication of the Youth Ministry Department of St Mary, Canandaigua, and St Bridget, Bloomfield.

Our Youth Ministry Mission Statement [Draft]:

Building on the mission of our parishes to follow the way of Christ in our thoughts, words, and deeds, and to make Christ more fully present in all who live within our community, the Youth Ministry mission is to empower young people to live as disciples of Jesus Christ in the world today; to affirm the gifts of our youth and provide opportunities for young people to share their gifts with the larger community; and to meet the religious, spiritual and social needs of all youth with the committed leadership, guidance and support of our parish family, providing an opportunity for our entire faith community to grow together in Christian faith.