

The Lord be with you.

Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. *John 14:27, 28*

Using the Kyries for the Ascension, let us confess our sins to God our Father.

God our Father, you exalted your Son to sit at your right hand. Therefore:

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the way, the truth and the life.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Holy Spirit, Counsellor, you are sent to be with us for ever.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Absolution Almighty God, who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy on you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Acts 1:6-14 [The Ascension of Jesus]

When the apostles had come together, they asked Jesus, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away. When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

This is the word of the Lord; **Thanks be to God.**

Luke 24:44-53

Jesus said to his disciples, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.' Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

This is the Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Sermon

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

We're at a crossroads today. Jesus' ministry is at an end. He has appeared to his followers after his resurrection and left them with hope for the future. Now we come to his last action. We have listened to two accounts of this. Luke brings the first volume of his gospel to a close with an account of Jesus' final appearance, and a brief description of his ascension. It provides at once a satisfying conclusion to Luke's story of "all that Jesus said and did". It also provides a transition to the story of Jesus' prophetic successors that he (Luke) will relate in his second volume: the Acts of the Apostles.

Luke has Jesus reminding his followers how his words and those of scripture serve to interpret the recent events of his life. He builds this incrementally: the empty tomb account showed that Jesus' passion prophecies reached fulfilment. The Emmaus story showed that Moses and the prophets foretold the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah. Remember what Jesus said at that time, "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?"

Now, we're told that "he opened their minds to understand the scriptures". He is telling us that the suffering and resurrection of the Messiah are shown to be the

key to explaining both the words of Jesus *and* of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.

I fear that not every Jew would feel able to interpret Torah purely as prefiguring Jesus as Messiah, but to me it is no less than the risen Lord teaching the Church to read Torah – the Old Testament – properly.

John's Gospel account (the normal reading for today) is more philosophical than Luke. It includes a prayer of Jesus to his Father which presumes his resurrection, but doesn't record it directly: He has Jesus pray that "now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them (the disciples) in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one."

Luke's account finishes very simply states that Jesus withdrew from the disciples and was carried up into heaven. No trumpets, no choirs of angels! Then, concisely, clearly: "I am sending upon you what my Father promised, so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high".

And that is the curtain-raiser to what we will celebrate next Sunday – the gift of the Holy Spirit – Pentecost Sunday. Now that is a celebration!

The weeks of the Easter season have been, to me, an extended exploration and explanation of our Christian belief – our creed. And it all comes from the Bible – nowhere else. So let us now declare that creed: "I believe ..."

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;

he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again;

he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

The Collect of the Seventh Sunday of Easter

O God the King of Glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven:

Mercifully give us faith to know that, as he promised, he abides with us on earth to the end of time; who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Prayers of intercession

Risen and ascended Lord, you have promised to be with us always; teach us to be aware of your presence, and to abide in your love, that we may walk in the way that leads to glory, where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Lord Jesus Christ, you came down to lift us up, you descended that we may ascend; grant us a glimpse of your glory. Give to your church a vision of your presence that it may proclaim your peace and your love. May we all learn to walk in the joy of your presence, and to always remember to give you thanks for all things.

We long for the time when the kingdoms of the world become your kingdom. We pray that the peace you offer may be accepted by rulers and leaders; that all in authority may rule with gentleness but firmness.

We pray for all who are not at peace with themselves or with others.

We pray for all who feel neglected and forsaken in our world; for all who feel the days are dark, and that the going is rough.

We bring before you the needs of our families and friends. We pray for peace in our local communities.

We pray for all who desire to improve our community. May they be people of vision. We remember before you all whose health has been severely compromised by COVID19 – and by sickness of any kind, that they may know your strength.

We rejoice that you are our great high priest who has ascended into heaven, and that there you make intercession for us. Lord, we join our prayers with yours, and we pray that our loved ones departed may rest and rejoice in your kingdom.

The Lord's Prayer

Lord, giver of love and power,
your Son has sent us into all the world to preach the gospel of his kingdom.
Confirm us in this mission, and help us to live the good news we proclaim;

And the blessing ...