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Feast of the Ascension of the Lord

Date: Sunday, June 1, 2025 | **Season:** Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Acts 1:1–11
Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 47:2–3, 6–9 | **Response:** Psalm 47:6
Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17–23
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 28:19a, 20b
Gospel Reading: Luke 24:46–53
Preached at: the Chapel of the Most Holy Name, Kolvenbach House **in the** Archdiocese of Lusaka, Zambia**.**

Brothers and sisters,

Ascension Day invites us to lift our eyes—not in idle wonder, but in awakened longing—to the heavens, to behold the risen Lord's ascent, and to ask what it truly means for our lives.

Art and Scripture alike capture the dual nature of this mystery: Christ ascending in glory, and the apostles, gazing upward, entrusted with the mission to carry His presence into the world. It's not the end of the story—it's the beginning of something new.

Christ's rising is not about absence. It's about a deeper, transformed presence. He no longer walks beside us on Galilean roads, but He has not left us. Still bearing our humanity, He enters into glory and opens the way for us to follow.

And His presence does not vanish—it deepens. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit, breathed into the hearts of the faithful. It is the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, where heaven touches earth. And it is the presence of Christ in the poor, the suffering, and the stranger—the sacrament of the neighbour in need. There, veiled yet real, He waits to be recognised and loved.

Some may wonder: if Christ has gone to heaven, has He abandoned us? Has He left us to fend for ourselves in a world of grief, injustice, and uncertainty? The answer, friends, is no. The Ascension is not His departure—it is the transformation of His closeness. No longer bound by time or place, He is now with us through the Spirit, in every moment and in every place.

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In the Acts of the Apostles, we meet the disciples, staring into the sky, hearts full of awe and uncertainty. Two messengers in white speak: “Why do you stand looking up to heaven?” Their eyes must turn from the sky to the world. Because the work is now theirs. Christ has given them a promise—the Spirit is coming. The story continues, and they are part of it.

And they are no longer just followers. They are now witnesses. And that word—witness—means truth lived with courage, love carried through risk. They will travel dusty roads, face hardship, proclaim mercy, not by their own strength, but by the power of the Spirit. That same Spirit is given to us.

Psalm 47 proclaims, “God goes up with shouts of joy; the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.” This is no disappearance—it is Christ’s enthronement. He reigns not above suffering, but through it. His throne bears the marks of the Cross. And in that place of glory, He intercedes for us.

What does that mean? It means Christ carries our lives before the Father—our fears, our hopes, our weariness, our wonder. His sacrifice is not locked in the past; it is alive and active now. When you feel overwhelmed—when the future is too dim to see—know this: Christ is already praying for you. Your name, like all those He loves, is carved upon His Sacred Heart. You are never alone.

In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul speaks of the “immeasurable greatness” of God’s power at work in us—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. And that power lives in the Church. Not as theory. As fuel. It turns hesitation into courage. It makes us light in a world that often forgets how to hope. Christ’s victory is not a monument to admire. It’s a life to be lived.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus opens the minds of His disciples to the Scriptures. Suddenly, everything fits. The stories they knew now point to Him. And when He blesses them and is taken from their sight, they do not leave in sorrow. They return with joy—not passing emotion, but joy rooted in clarity. They understand. His rising is their rising. His mission is now their own.

The Ascension reminds us that we live in the “already, but not yet” of the Kingdom. Christ has gone ahead, but the world is still waiting. It waits for witnesses. For those willing to carry the Gospel to the margins, to the wounded, to the places still longing for light.

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And when your faith feels weak—when Christ seems far—remember this: He has not disappeared. He has gone ahead to prepare a place for you. And He remains closer than breath.

The Spirit He sends meets us not in theory, but in the reality of our lives. In the parent seeking wisdom. In the nurse who does not quit. In the student unsure of the next step. In the friend who loves without needing words. The Spirit brings prayer to life. The Spirit gives humility its strength. The Spirit holds hope even in silence.

That same Spirit speaks through Catholic Social Teaching. Not as policy, but as a way of seeing the world as Christ sees it. It teaches us to protect the dignity of each person. To uplift the poor. To care for creation. To pursue peace through justice. For instance, *Laudato Si'* calls us to care for our common home, recognizing that the earth is a gift from God and that we are called to be stewards of creation. Today, as we observe World Communications Day, let us also remember the call to 'disarm communication,' purifying it of all aggression, and sharing with gentleness the hope that resides within us.

In Zambia, this means more than being kind. It means creating conditions where families eat today—and tomorrow. Where children can go to school. Where clean water flows and farmers thrive. Where love translates into fair systems and just structures. Love without justice is incomplete.

So today, as we mark this Ascension, remember: Christ has not left us. He has lifted us. And now He calls us to bear His presence into the world.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, as we mark Your Ascension, we thank You for the hope and promise it brings. You have not left us behind, but gone ahead to prepare a place. Send us Your Holy Spirit. Make us faithful in small things, brave in difficult ones. Give us grace to serve with joy, to speak truth with tenderness, and to live as those who believe that heaven has already touched the earth. Amen.

And now, quietly, let us each ask:

- How am I being called to be Christ's presence—in my home, my parish, my studies, my community?

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- What signs in my life show that I am open to the Holy Spirit? And where do I need to ask for His help more deeply?
- How might this Easter season become not only a time of celebration, but of mission—a time to bring resurrection hope to someone who needs it?

And finally—As Pope Leo XIV calls the Church to move forward through synodality, let us not stand frozen, staring at the sky. Let us walk together—embracing communion, participating fully, seeking deeper understanding of eternal truth, as Christ sends us on mission.

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.