

Ascension Day service

Greeting and Introduction

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for forty days we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, his bursting from the tomb and his defeat of the power of sin and death. He appeared to his disciples many times and told them about the kingdom of God.

Today we recall how he left this earth and returned to his Father, ascending into heaven to take his throne over all dominions and powers. Trusting in his reign over all creation, and submitting to his kingly yet loving rule, let us hear the story of his parting.

Reading: Acts 1.1-11

The Promise of the Holy Spirit

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning ²until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. ⁴While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. 'This', he said, 'is what you have heard from me; ⁵for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'

The Ascension of Jesus

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' ⁷He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸But 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.'⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. ¹¹They 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.'

Collect

Risen Christ,
you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven:
help us to seek and serve you,
that we may join you at the Father's side,
where you reign with the Spirit in glory,
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Music reflection

If ye love me *by Thomas Tallis*

Gospel: Luke 24.44-53 *read by Ekene Agbalakwe*

Then he said to them, '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.'⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹And 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.'

The Ascension of Jesus

⁵⁰ Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; ⁵³ and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Address: Ekene Agbalakwe

Prayers of Intercession

Let us join our prayers with those of our Saviour Christ, seeking the Father's blessing and the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus Christ, great high priest,
living for ever to intercede for us,
pray for the Church, your broken body in the world.
Help us to look toward heaven, and to be grounded on earth,
serving our brothers and sisters in need.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, king of righteousness,
enthroned at the right hand of the majesty on high,
pray for the world, and make it subject to your gentle rule.
We pray for the world in this pandemic time;
give wisdom to all rulers to lead wisely and sensibly.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Son of Man,
drawing humanity into the life of God,
pray for your brothers and sisters in need, distress or sorrow.
We pray for all those who are sick, including those at St Edmund's,
and those we know who need your healing touch,
especially those struck down by COVID-19.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, pioneer of our salvation,
bringing us to glory through your death and resurrection,
surround with your saints and angels
those who have died trusting your promises.
In a moment of silence, we remember all those dear to us
who now sit at your feet in your Kingdom.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, Lord over all things,
ascended far above the heavens and filling the universe,
pray for us who receive the gifts you give us for work in your service.
Especially we pray for St. Edmund's in this time of transition;
inspire the Churchwardens and the Council
with your Spirit of Wisdom and Counsel.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, graciously hear us.**

Jesus Christ, keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at your feet;

for you are alive and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reading: Ascension (Malcolm Guite)

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place.
As earth became a part of Heaven's story
And heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted;
He took us with him to the heart of things.
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centred now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we our selves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed .

Responsory

As we wait in silence, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we listen to your word, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we worship you in majesty, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we long for your refreshing, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we long for your renewing, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we long for your equipping, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**
As we long for your empowering, **make us ready for your coming Spirit.**

Blessing

God the Father,
who has given to his Son the name above every name,
strengthen you to proclaim Christ Jesus as Lord. **Amen.**

God the Son,
who is our great high priest passed into the heavens,
plead for you at the right hand of the Father. **Amen.**

God the Holy Spirit,
who pours out his abundant gifts upon the Church,
make you faithful servants of Christ our King. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**