

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Go and teach all nations, says the Lord; I am with you always, until the end of the world.

Today we celebrate the glory of Christ, risen and ascended into heaven.

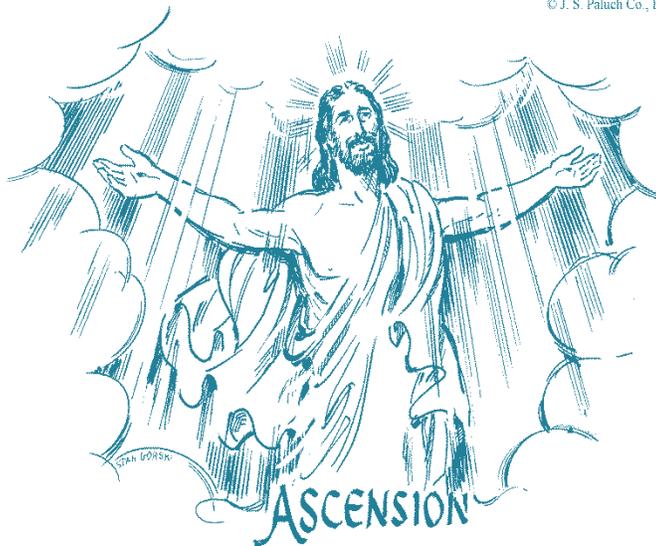
Inspired by this rich promise of life, let us rejoice in Jesus Christ, who is the power and the glory of God.

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?” “Stop looking at the sky, and look around you.” But today is a day for looking upward, for looking at the sky. What we see is not totally different from what we imagined as a child. Today the heavens are opened. Christ ascended, and we stand and wonder. In fact every time we gather for Mass, Christ ascends. Every time we offer the body of Christ to the Father, the heavens are open, that people of heaven are present, and the Father receives our offering. The heavens are opened and it is if heaven and earth are one.

When God and the heavenly community look down on us both communities have come together to celebrate the sacraments. That is what the Ascension is all about. We are used to thinking of Mass in the terms of the Lord’s Supper, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection. Today we remember that it is also about Christ ascending to the Father, opening the heavens.

Today when we offer the Body of Christ, again the heavens are open and it is we who enter them to participate in the heavenly liturgy. The Ascension is our feast day as we look forward in the sacraments what will one day be ours in reality.

The early Christians had no difficulty with the Ascension. For them it was vital in their celebration of the Eucharist. Conscious that the heavens were opened, and that they were participating in the



© J. S. Paluch Co., Inc.

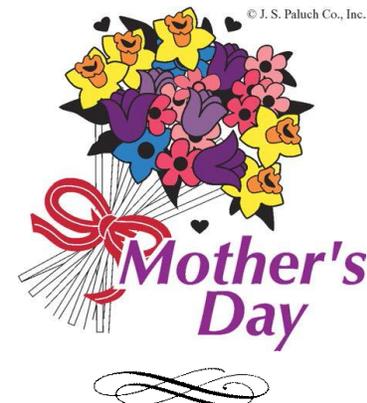
heavenly liturgy, they gave us prayers that we still say today.

“And so with all the choirs of angels in heaven we proclaim, and join in their unending hymn of praise: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord ...” It is interesting that in our first reading that tension is part of Christianity, a tension between the “looking up” at the wonder of God and the

“looking up” at other people in the world. We live in a tension between prayer and good works. Looking upward in our Sunday Liturgy should inspire us in our Gospel living. But yet today we see many people looking down at the ground, burdened and depressed perhaps, with little sense of wonder and awe on their faces, little sense of joy.

Perhaps we need to look up so that the mystery of what we celebrate with our heavenly community each Sunday would encourage us on Monday and every other day of the week to go out and look for those who truly need us.

The real question today is not: “Where did Jesus go?” What we must really contemplate is “Where is Jesus asking us to go.”



© J. S. Paluch Co., Inc.