



Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

[Seventh Sunday of Easter superseded]

† **Sunday 28th May 2017**

Cycle of Prayer: New Members of the Church

Keynote: You are the witnesses – the Lord is risen!

Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11

Luke writing the introduction to the Acts of the Apostles recalls that in his earlier work – the Gospel according to Luke – he had *'dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.'* Luke then reminds his readers about the death of Jesus, his resurrection and how the risen Lord met with the disciples, and how after the resurrection, *'When he had been at table with them,'* Jesus had told them, *'about the kingdom of God... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but... indeed to the ends of the earth.'* Jesus, thus having thus instructed his apostles, *was lifted up while they look on, and a cloud took him from their sight.'*

Responsorial Psalm 46 (47) – a praise psalm addressed to God, King of the World

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 1: 17-23

This text is in the form of a prayer of thanksgiving, which recalls the might, and power of the risen Christ, who is triumphant over all other powers. Paul prays that God, the Father of glory, *'give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you.'* For Paul, the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation of his faith and of all his missionary endeavours, and it is the risen Christ ascended into glory who is, *'the head of the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.'*

Gospel according to Matthew 28: 16-20

Matthew packs rather a lot into very few words in this passage, which the Church chooses for today. The Eleven disciples set out for Galilee, and assemble on the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them – the mountain of revelation. Then, *'When they saw him they fell down before him though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them.'* There are doubters here too – hesitant about what they see and hear. Like disciples today sometimes facing doubts and yet encountering Christ in their lives. So the Eleven meet the risen Lord, but it is not what they see that is recorded, but rather what Jesus says: *'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands that I gave you. Know that I am with you always – to the end of time.'* We have our orders, our mission is clear – we are the chosen witnesses!

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Note: In England and Wales the Ascension is celebrated today in place of the Seventh Sunday.