

## THE ASCENSION – 2026

**Acts 1:1-11; Ps 46; Ephesians 1:17-23; Luke 24:46-53**

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*‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven’.<sup>1</sup>*

These are words from angels to the disciples who witness the resurrected Jesus being taken up into heaven.

The disciples must have been asking themselves as they gaze up, *‘Why does he have to go, what are we going to do now?’* This made no more sense than when before His crucifixion he said: *“It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you”,<sup>2</sup>* and now He was raised from the dead leaving once again and speaking once again in riddles: *‘you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.’?*

Why is Jesus ascended, why can He not be right here with us? We are tempted to say that we do not want the Spirit, we want Jesus. The response is, when we receive the Spirit, we receive Jesus, but more. Let me attempt an explanation:

Once Jesus ascended into heaven and was sat at the right of his Father in Heaven, then He could send His Spirit into our souls so that He would not be with us as an external Person but as a living Soul. Then He would not merely be someone visible to be copied or

emulated, but someone life-giving to be reproduced; not someone external to be portrayed in our lives, but a someone living to be developed within us.<sup>3</sup> His ascension into Heaven, and His sending of the Holy Spirit, alone make it possible for Him to unite Himself wholly with us, to take up His abode with us, body and blood, soul and divinity and to be in the strictest sense of the term ‘Christ within you’. It was necessary that He go, otherwise, He would forever belong to space and time. Now He belongs to all humanity, in all places and in all times.

Let me explain it another way.

Through the Holy Spirit, which Jesus sends into His mystical Body - which is the Church - Christ is living now on earth just as really and truly as He was living in Galilee 2000 years ago. In us.

If Jesus had remained in the body, His disciples would have fixed their eyes on Him, people would continue to flock to Him to hear his words and touch the fringe of his robe. But this was not His design. His desire was that all men and women should be able to see Him, not with their eyes, but with their souls. His desire was to be closer to those who loved him, closer even than His disciples had been when He himself walked with them in Galilee: for them to be as close to Him as He was with the Father. If he did not go, then he would be a distraction from what He wanted them to be. If He was here now, even now, He would be a distraction from what He continues to desire for us and for the world: the conversion of the men of dust and death into Men of

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 1:11

<sup>2</sup> John 16: 7

<sup>3</sup> What follows over the next paragraph is a sketch of what has been written with much more wisdom and concise thought than I possess in: Sheen, Fulton, The Holy Hour Prayer Book, p31-33

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Grace and life through the Love He has for the Father, into which we are invited.

These are the Words of Jesus at the conclusion of Matthew's Gospel: *'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.'* What Jesus has commanded, if you recall last week's Gospel, is to love God as He himself has loved the Father, and to love one another as He has loved us. This requires the fire of the Holy Spirit, not directed in gawping upwards in awe for which the disciples are admonished, but with a fixity of purpose so spread the consuming Fire of the Holy Spirit across the face of the earth. Jesus ascends so that through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we may become His face and voice and works throughout the whole world, and so that He might be made visible through his Church. To conclude, Jesus ascends so that wherever his Baptised people are, He might be too.