



Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord

† Thursday 10th May 2018

In England & Wales

Cycle of Prayer – New members of the Church

Keynote: Disciples are the witnesses

Acts of the Apostles 1: 1-11

Luke in this introduction to the writing we know as the Acts of the Apostles recalls all that Jesus had done and said from the beginning. He reminds readers about the death of Jesus, his resurrection and how the risen Lord met with the disciples; 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.'* Then having instructed his apostles, promising them that the Holy Spirit would come, Jesus was taken up to heaven.

Responsorial Psalm 46 (47) – A processional song in praise of God's victory!

Letter of Paul to the Ephesians 1: 17-23 (Optional in Year B – Ephesians 4: 1-13)

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 Mark 16: 15-20

It is possible that the original ending to Mark's account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has been lost – like the final page that falls from a book in frequent use! This passage, it is widely thought, has been added for the sake of completeness at a later date sometime in the second century. But the text, drawing as it does on the narratives of the other evangelists and the New Testament writings, does offer a summary of faith and of fact for us today. The risen Jesus, showing himself to the Eleven says: *'Go out to the whole world. Proclaim the good news to all creation. The one who believes and is baptised will be saved.'* We now know with hindsight that the Eleven and their companions did precisely that. Despite the difficulties of travel and many hardships, the disciples travelled widely throughout the ancient world, to tell the good news of salvation. So the gospel narrative comes to a close: *'The Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.'* Now today, the Lord is working with us to proclaim the good news, if only we will listen and respond as disciples in service as his witnesses.

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