

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Our Lord spoke clearly and plainly to the Pharisees when He said: "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." And so too did the Lord say to His bewildered disciples "'What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?'"

You confess this in the Creed. You confess that our Lord, the Savior of the world, came down from heaven. And you confess that He ascended into heaven. And there He sits at the right hand of God, the position of power and authority over all heaven and earth. If His Baptism was His Installation, His Ascension is His Coronation. His State of Humiliation is ended. He always and fully uses His Divine Powers. And yet He is still fully Man.

He is crowned with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne, His throne in the center of the heavenly throne room surrounded by angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. Around Him are the cherubim and seraphim, and the four mysterious living creatures. He lives and reigns for eternity in His State of Exaltation.

As He promised, He has ascended into heaven. He has ascended to where He was before, where He was before the foundation of the world, where He was from eternity. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is from above. He is not of this world. The Son of Man has done as He promised.

St. Matthew writes that after the resurrection, the Eleven met the Lord on the mountain He had designated, and seeing Him they worshipped, but some doubted. St. Mark tells us more. While the Eleven sat at table, the Lord rebuked them because they had not believed the report of His resurrection. He rebuked them, and then He sent them out.

He sent out flawed and imperfect men with a Pure and Saving Word. He sent them out to preach Christ and Him crucified and risen and ascended for the life of the world. And after He had spoken to them, He was received up to heaven, and sat at the right hand of God.

St. Luke provides an orderly account of the Lord's Ascension as well. While the Eleven watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him from their sight. He is from above. And He has returned to the place from whence He came. He is from above. He is above. But we are still from beneath. He is not of this world, but we are in this world. And we who are in this world have sin, because this world is fallen.

And as God proclaimed of the fall, the just punishment for your transgressions, for your shortcomings, for your wrongdoings both known to others and known only to yourself, is death. But somehow, in the delusion of the sinful flesh, the knowledge of the just punishment for sin hasn't stopped you from sinning. So hear the Word of the Lord: "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM He, you will die in your sins."

Your Lord's Words are the strongest Law. But in love, in mercy, He includes in those Words a Promise – if you believe that He is God the Son, the One sent by the Father, the Son begotten of the Father from all eternity, the Enfleshed Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of Mary, the Crucified One, the Risen One, the Ascended One; if you believe that He is the great I AM, there is not death, but forgiveness and everlasting life for you.

And that you believe, that you hear the Saving Word, the Ascending Lord spoke to the Eleven and gave them a promise for you: “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” That Witness, that Saving Gospel, that Apostolic Doctrine is yours in the Holy Scriptures, and in the preached Word.

He finished the Work of your redemption. No one else could have. But before His Ascension, He who is One with the Holy Church on earth gave to the Eleven the authority bring that finished work to the nations. And the Holy Spirit, working through the eleven, called others to multiply their efforts. The same Spirit, works through the Church to call and ordain men to continue that saving work in our time and in this place. But the Ascended Lord is still Lord of the Church.

Before His ascension He spoke with one voice. Many heard Him. But before He ascended, He gave eleven men the authority to preach in His Name. He gave them authority to baptize. He gave them authority to forgive sins on earth as in heaven, in His stead and by His command.

You receive the fruits of that Apostolic Ministry. You are baptized. You hear, and by the Spirit's power you believe. Believing, you have the forgiveness Christ won on the cross. Believing, you have the righteousness of His miraculous resurrection. Believing, you have forgiveness, salvation, and everlasting life. But there is more. He is from above. And believing, soon you too will be above. For He has promised that He has gone to prepare a place for you, that where He is, there you also will be.

Christ ascended into heaven fully God and fully Man. There is a Man in heaven. He opened heaven to men. He opened heaven to you. Soon the Ascended Christ will come again on the clouds, to judge the quick and the dead, and to take His Church home. Then, you who died with Him in baptism, you who rose with Him from the font, you will rise and meet the Lord in the air, and ascend with Him to that Paradise He has won for you.

This night the ascended Christ places His Body with Bread for you to eat here. He places His Blood with Wine for you to drink here. Yes, He is from above. But He is still Immanuel, God with us. And by the Sacramental Union He makes what is above present for you here, uniting you to Himself, uniting you to heaven.

So while you are in this world, let this be your hope: Christ died and rose for you, and He has ascended into heaven. He has sent His Spirit to fill you, to keep you until you receive the heavenly reward He won for you. Until that day, remember the angelic Word of promise: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” Take heart, O Redeemed of Christ, that promise is for you.

St. Mark 16:14-20  
The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, 2018 A.✠D.

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.