

Sunday Easter 7 24th May 2020

Welcome and Call to worship

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, for forty days we have been celebrating with joyful hearts the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, his bursting from the tomb and his defeat of the power of sin and death. He appeared to his disciples many times and told them about the kingdom of God. Today we recall how he left this earth and returned to his Father, ascending into heaven to take his throne over all dominions and powers.

**Hail the day that sees him rise, Alleluia!
to his throne beyond the skies. Alleluia!
Christ, the Lamb for sinners given, Alleluia!
enters now the highest heaven. Alleluia!
Highest heaven its Lord receives; Alleluia!
yet he loves the earth he leaves. Alleluia!
Though returning to his throne, Alleluia!
still he calls us all his own. Alleluia!**

Charles Wesley

We come from scattered lives to meet with God.

Let us recognise his presence with us.

Alleluia Christ is Risen.

He is Risen indeed Alleluia

As God's people we have gathered.

Let us worship him together.

Penitential Rite

Jesus is our high priest, tempted like us, yet without sin.

He lives for ever in heaven to intercede for us.

Through him we approach the throne of grace

with confidence, and confess our sins. (*Hebrews 4.15,16*)

Lord God, we have sinned against you;
we have done evil in your sight.

We are sorry and repent.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

Have mercy on us according to your love.

Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us from our sin.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

Renew a right spirit within us
and restore us to the joy of your salvation,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In your mercy, forgive us.

Lord, hear us and help us.

May the Father of all mercies
cleanse us from our sins,
and restore us in his image
to the praise and glory of his name,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.**

Lord God, heavenly King,

almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks,

we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

**Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

Collect:

Risen Christ,
you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven:
help us to seek and serve you,
that we may join you at the Father's side,
where you reign with the Spirit in glory,
now and for ever. **Amen**

1st Reading Acts 1:6-14 (NIV)

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. **11** "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has

been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

12 Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city. **13** When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. **14** They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

To greet the Gospel: *From Edward Joseph Burns*

We have a gospel to proclaim,
good news for all throughout the earth;
the gospel of a Saviour’s name;
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Now we rejoice to name Him king:

Jesus is Lord of all the earth;
this gospel-message we proclaim:
we sing his glory, tell his worth.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.
Glory to you, O Lord.

John 17:1-11 (NIV). Jesus Prays to Be Glorified

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed:

“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. **2** For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. **3** Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **4** I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do. **5** And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

6 “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. **7** Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. **8** For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. **9** I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. **10** All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. **11** I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

“Why are you looking up?”

The whole idea of Ascension makes us want to look up doesn't it? And I wonder what that moment was like...

England is, I think, one of the countries that has lost some sense of the significance of the Ascension, almost as if it were just a post script or an epilogue after the story that really finished with the resurrection. A sort of "Oh, and by the way - well after that he went back were he came from!" But it is sooooo much more than that!

The Ascension - first of all marks the end of Jesus earthly appearances to his disciples.

Then, the Ascension of Jesus is important because it is part of Jesus' vindication. Jesus died - crucified (a shameful criminals death). But now Jesus is risen and ascended to the right hand of the Father - where he reigns in glory. If the resurrection was part one (if you like) of Jesus vindication and exaltation, then the Ascension is part two; part one was to raise him to new life and part two was to raise him to heaven to the right hand of the Father.

And the book of Daniel gives us a wonderful picture of what his welcome might have been like "In my vision at night I looked - and there before me was one like a son of man coming on the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. (Dan 7:13-14)

In the light of this we might say the Ascension is Jesus' exaltation, his coronation and his enthronement; testimony to the truth that
"The highest place that heaven affords

is his, is his by right,
the King of Kings and Lord of Lords
and heavens eternal light." *Thomas Kelly*

And as one writer (Tom Wright) puts it - the governance of the whole universe is now in the utterly safe and scarred hands of Jesus, the one who alone will use power exclusively in the service of love.

I'll repeat that - the governance of the whole universe is now in the utterly safe and scarred hands of Jesus, the one who alone will use power exclusively in the service of love.

Is there no end to the love that our God pours out upon us?

First we were made in his own image to steward, to rule and care for creation (Gen 1: 26). Then he sent his only Son; God himself came in flesh as one of us, to die and to save us and to bring us back to his gracious heart (John 1). And now still more: in the Ascension of Jesus something of our human nature has now been taken into the realm of God, into the presence of God, onto the throne of God. (*Ephesians 4:6*)

God, in his mercy and grace, has eternally "welded himself to us" (*Michael Lloyd*) so that we can never again lose our access to God. The God who used to walk with us in the garden in the cool of the evening, this God invites us, and has made it possible for us, to be with him, alive with him - wherever he is - and for all eternity.

And although he has ascended - we are not left alone. Last week we heard His wonderful promise, "I will not leave you alone. I will not leave you like orphans". "I will send the

Holy Spirit". And today His prayer for us, "Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one."

The Spirit is the chapter of this "God story" that we live today - Now Jesus has returned to the Father and God has poured out his Spirit on all flesh - on you and me - **And for a purpose...** Because Jesus came not just to show us how to get to heaven, but to **show us how to live.**

And so now, for those who were standing and looking up... there is as yet work to be done. The mission of Jesus goes on in the work of the Church, which is now anointed
*to proclaim good news to the poor,
to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."* Luke 4:18

And so as we remember and celebrate Jesus' Ascension to the Father's side - we must also choose to accept our calling - and look again towards Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit - as we continue to pray...

Holy Spirit

Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us,
to live your love
with generosity and joy
imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world
and in the name of Jesus.

Prayer of response

Living God draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit make us heralds of good news.
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us,
to live your love
with generosity and joy
imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world
and in the name of Jesus, **Amen.** *(Living God's Love Prayer - St Alban's Diocese)*

Our Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God the Father,
God almighty, by whose plan
earth and heaven sprang to being,
all created things began.**

**We believe in Christ the Saviour,
Son of God in human frame,
virgin-born, the child of Mary
upon whom the Spirit came.**

**Christ, who on the cross forsaken,
like a lamb to slaughter led,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
he descended to the dead.**

**We believe in Jesus risen,
heaven's king to rule and reign,
to the Father's side ascended
till as judge he comes again.**

We believe in God the Spirit;

**in one Church, below, above:
saints of God in one communion,
one in holiness and love.
So by faith, our sins forgiven,
Christ our Saviour, Lord and friend,
we shall rise with him in glory
to the life that knows no end. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession - *Prepared by Nick Rogers, (Shefford)*

Let us pray to the Father, glorified in the Son to whom all things in heaven and earth are given.

Heavenly Father, in your Son Jesus Christ you share your life with our life. Unite your church in this vitality that it may witness to your truth.

Heavenly Father, watch over the churches in which we worship, and your church throughout the world - where ever people meet in your name.

Heavenly Father, mankind faces new challenges every day during this time of so many unknown certainties. We place our hope in you Lord, certain of you everlasting love.

In your mercy Lord **Hear our Prayer**

Heavenly Father, your Son expanded the narrow vision of his disciples. Enlarge the scope of our concern to embrace people of all nations and races. All around your world there are people who face so much poverty, starvation, illness and deprivation that we find it hard to comprehend.

Heavenly Father, your followers and believers are spread all over this orb of creation, many worship in fear of persecution, or for their lives.

Keep us watchful against all that would devour the weak and vulnerable.

In your mercy Lord, **Hear our Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you give us grace to share your love with one another. Bless our families and friends, those closest to us and unknown strangers whom to know would enrich us through this time of such division and isolation due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Help us to make use of the technology available to us, so we can keep in touch with our families, loved ones and friends. Heavenly Father, enfold all people within your loving arms.

In your mercy Lord, **Hear our Prayer**

Heavenly Father, hear the cry of all who cast their anxiety on your loving care. We bring to you Lord and ask for your blessings on those at this time who are in ill health, those we know personally, those we know in passing and those Lord who we only know through the daily reports in the media.

Pause for a moment of silence.

Restore and strengthen us in your service.

In your mercy Lord, **Hear our Prayer**

Heavenly Father, your glory unites earth and heaven. Gather to yourself the faithful departed and comfort their families and loved ones.

Pause for a moment of silence.

Grant eternal life to all children of your possession.

Merciful Father, accept all these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let's pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in Heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.**

Notices and Birthdays

Our closing acclamation:

Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.
Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
**He has given us new life and hope.
He has raised Jesus from the dead.**
God has claimed us as his own.
**He has brought us out of darkness.
He has made us light to the world.**
Alleluia. Christ is risen.
He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

Blessing...

God the Father,
by whose love Christ was raised from the dead,
open to you who believe the gates of everlasting life.
Amen.

God the Son,
who in bursting from the grave has won a glorious victory,
give you joy as you share the Easter faith. **Amen.**

God the Holy Spirit,
who filled the disciples with the life of the risen Lord,
empower you and fill you with Christ's peace. **Amen.**

And the blessing ...

...and the sending

With the power that raised Jesus from the dead at work within
you, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia.
In the name of Christ. Amen. Alleluia, alleluia.

Hymn of the day: Stuart Townend

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,

Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

Holy Spirit, come abide within,
May Your joy be seen in all I do.
Love enough to cover every sin,
In each thought and deed and attitude.
Kindness to the greatest and the least,
Gentleness that sows the path of peace.
Turn my strivings into works of grace;
Breath of God show Christ in all I do.

Holy Spirit, from creation's birth,
Giving life to all that God has made,
Show Your power once again on earth,
Cause Your church to hunger for your ways.
Let the fragrance of our prayers arise;
Lead us on the road of sacrifice,
That in unity the face of Christ
May be clear for all the world to see.

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Jesus' Ascension

SaintAnnesHelper.com

The Ascension of Jesus

While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. Luke 24:51 (NIV)

Based on Luke 24:44-53



B T Q O M D Q S U F F E R U F
F N C Q W O P S A L M S T S A
G X N Q O F S M Z Z H N U C O
B B Y C R O T E C M E T N R J
R A P R S R S P S P F E C I A
N I G Y H G U P E G K D L P S
Z F S F I I M R N A N W D T P
B J Z E P V F S T A Y E E U O
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D E C N K U N P L F J S D Q S
H R U I F H O G G V Y K S L C

RISE
SUFFER
HEAVEN
WORSHIPED

REPENT
PSALMS
SCRIPTURE
BLESSING

PROPHETS
OPENED
FULFILLED
UNDERSTAND

TAKEN
FORGIVE
MOSES
MINDS