

May 18, 2023



Center for Spiritual Development

Daily Reflections

JOURNEYING THROUGH EASTER

Photo by Tomas Williams from Pexels

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS

Ascension Thursday

By Sister Christine Hilliard, CSJ

Today's Gospel

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing 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. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

MATTHEW 28:16-20

Reflection

About the feast of the Ascension: the celebration of Easter is the oldest yearly feast for Christians. Especially in the fourth and fifth centuries, new feast days were established with gospel events in mind. In the late fourth century, many Christians began to celebrate a day in memory of the Ascension of the Lord. Generally, this was remembered on the fortieth day after Easter. The remembrance points not to Christ's absence but rather to his presence: "I am with you always." (Mt. 28:20)

The Ascension gospel reading from Matthew begins on a note of sadness: "The eleven disciples . . ." No longer are there twelve. One is missing from the original community. Then it is noted that while they "worshiped" when they saw him, "they doubted." They had "little"/small faith, i.e., not as deep as it could be. (Welcome to the world of the disciple! Faith is something that is always growing.) Notably, they are to be teachers just like Jesus. They are to share in his ministry with whatever faith they have. It is their/our partnership with God that grows and sustains everything.

The Ascension setting is on a mountain, a precious location for believers since before Abraham. With the view that the Holy One is "above" in the heavens and we are "below" on earth, the mountain image offers a point of connection and a meeting place for revelation. God and humans encounter each other on the mountaintop as One goes "down" to the meeting place and the other one goes "up."

The message of the Ascension is twofold: not only is Christ always present within the believing community, but the community is also to live and teach the all-embracing love of God as Jesus did.



The sun rises over the crest of distant hills
Photo by Gareth Davies/ Pexels

For Pondering

- What aspect of this day gives you hope? How will you share it?
 - Where is your “mountaintop,” your meeting place with God? Might you be invited to another location today?
 - Describe the presence of God as God is with you now. What is your response?
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For Prayer

*Dear God,
Guide me to the mountaintop
where I may rest with you.
There please teach me
to see your loving presence in my world
and*

to be your healing presence in the world.

*Together
may we nourish and celebrate
all that is.*

Amen.

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