

How would we feel and act if we were there?

Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way as you have seen him going into heaven.”

If we were in the place of the disciples, I am sure that we would have been standing there looking at the sky for perhaps even longer than they were. But the disciples were reminded, as we are, that Jesus will return in the same way as he ascended into heaven. This return, is not necessarily the second coming, but rather a fulfillment of the first coming itself. The feast of the Ascension can appear at first sight to be of Jesus’ return to the Father and of leaving his disciples. But on deeper reflection we see that Jesus never leaves his disciples. He continues to be present with them, now in a more profound way. After the resurrection and before the Ascension, Jesus appears to specific people at specific places and times. Now, with the Ascension, Jesus becomes present to all in a profound and deep way. The Ascension reminds us of our trinitarian baptism, an acknowledgment of God above (Father), with us and by our side (Son) and within us (Holy Spirit).

On this feast of the Ascension it might be helpful to remind ourselves, as Saint Ignatius does in the Spiritual Exercises, of Christ, our Divine Majesty and Eternal King. Using Ignatian imagination we can imagine what our world would be like if Christ were the King. What if Christ were the President, or Governor, or Mayor? What would change? What would be different? And, how can we in our own, small way, work to bring about that change or be that difference. Then, indeed will we be responding to the call of Christ, helping him to realize God’s kingdom here on earth. Yes, even in the midst of the COVID-19 situation that we are



Dear Jesus


Help me to spread Your fragrance everywhere I go.  
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.  
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly,  
that my life may only be a radiance of Yours.

Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul I  
come in  
contact with may feel Your presence in my soul.  
Let them look up and see no longer me but only Je-  
sus!

Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You  
shine,  
so to shine as to be a light to others; The light, O  
Jesus will be  
all from You; none of it will be mine;  
It will be you shining on others through me.

**Cardinal John Henry Newman.**





*Our Lady of Nativity Parish Bulletin .*

254 Great Western Highway, Lawson, NSW 2783. **PO BOX 44, Lawson, 2783.**  
Phone: 4759 1034.  
Email: [olon3@bigpond.com](mailto:olon3@bigpond.com) / [lawson@parracatholic.org](mailto:lawson@parracatholic.org)

**Parish Website:** [www.lawsoncatholicchurch.org.au](http://www.lawsoncatholicchurch.org.au)  
**Parish Priest:** Fr Paul Slyney - 4754 1052. **Emergency:** 0418 461 316  
**Assistant Priest:** Fr Michael Gathuku - 4754 1052. **Emergency:** 0474 272 605

**Parish Office Hours:**

**Weekend Masses:**

**Weekday Mass:**

**Baptisms:**

**Reconciliation:**

**Weddings:**

Thursdays & Fridays 9.30 am - 3.30 pm

Cancelled until further notice.

5:00PM Tuesday and Wednesday and 9:00 AM Thursday. 10 people only. Call the parish office to confirm your attendance.

In emergency only. Call Fr Paul.

By appointment - Call the parish office.

By appointment six months notice. Call the parish office.



I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the God of glory,  
may give you a spirit of wisdom and reflection as you come to know him,  
so that with the eyes of your heart enlightened,  
you may know what is the hope to which you have been called,  
what are the riches of God’s glorious inheritance among the saints,  
and what is the immeasurable greatness of God’s power  
for us who believe.  
*Eph.1:17-19.*

What is the hope to which we are called in this chaotic time? We mourn the loss of the freedom to be with family and friends, the loss of life that often found the victim dying alone. Our people are losing jobs and homes, some lonely; some going hungry,  
Where do we find the hope to which we have been called?  
Can we look “with the eyes of our enlightened hearts” to see the opportunities to reach out with “the immeasurable greatness of God’s power available to us who believe?”  
We don’t have to be anything more than our own authentic selves in the ordinary events of our daily lives to find the opportunity to see with the eyes of our hearts. We can watch for the opportunities.  
I am asking for the grace to live in these times trusting God who is trusting us with that kind of power even when we may feel powerless.  
Let us encourage one

*Carol Tedori.*



## Recently Deceased:

**Anniversaries:** Owen McKenna, Patricia Carmichael & Delores Davis.

**Sick:** Fr Theo Arrivoli, Wendy Starkey, Rob Nickl, Flo Thatcher, Patricia Wolthers, Tochillo Brown. Maurice Rooney, Isabelle Foster, Lanfranco Matteucci & John Newman, Raymond Plumridge and all Private Intentions.

*Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the permission*

## Lectionary readings

**First reading:** Acts 1:1-11

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 47

**Second reading:** Ephesians 1:17-23

**Gospel:** Matthew 28:16-20

**The Ascension of the Lord presents more than usual difficulty for preachers.**

Without being too technical about it, I think we have to make clear to people that the biblical account given in the **First Reading**, Acts 1:1-11 (see also Luke 24:46-53) does not mean that Jesus, at the end of his earthly career, literally ascended in way described. The clear parallels with the description of the ascent into heaven of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-18) suggest that St Luke is completing here his characteristic depiction of Jesus in terms of that persecuted prophet. Having escaped the clutches of his enemies by rising from the dead, Jesus now makes an Elijah-like ascent to heaven.

**GOD'S RIGHT HAND.**

In biblical language and imagery this signals the truth that the One who had been crucified on the trumped-up charge of being a political Messiah, a rebel against Rome, and who God raised from the dead to vindicate his true messianic status, has now entered messianic glory at God's right hand. He has indeed been removed from human sight to commence a reign in heaven but this does not mean an abandonment of either the disciples or his saving mission in the world. On the contrary, through the Spirit he will be present and active in a new mode of being. The disciples had felt the power of the Spirit that was upon him during his earthly life. Now they are assured that, as a result of his messianic enthronement, an empowering 'clothing' with his Spirit will come down on them and accompany them as they take his Word and witness 'to the ends of the earth'.

**UNDERSTANDABLE CONCERN.**

Just before Jesus departs, the disciples voice an understandable concern: 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' Here we seem to have the last flicker of the hope that Jesus would be a Messiah along the lines of conventional messianic expectation. Also present is a strong sense of 'unfinished business'. Jesus may be the Messiah, but neither now nor in the foreseeable future do the times and conditions look particularly 'messianic'. Same old world, same old patterns of violence, suffering and death.

Jesus does not give a direct answer to the disciples' query. The time of the Kingdom's full arrival and the completion of the messianic program remains shrouded in the mystery of God. What the disciples must understand is that, empowered by the Spirit, they are to become instruments of its realisation in the new era – that of the Church – that lies ahead. Through their hands and feet and mouth Jesus will continue his messianic work until the end of time. The conflict he faced will be their conflict too (something the Acts of the Apostles will abundantly demonstrate). But in all their trials and labours he will be with them, inspiring and guiding their work from heaven through the Spirit.

**PLACED 'ABOVE'.**

Much the same idea is communicated by the passage from Ephesians that forms today's **Second Reading**, Eph 1:17-23. It portrays the raising of Christ from the dead and his enthronement at God's right hand as one continuous exercise of divine power, involving a triumph over all powers hostile to God and God's plan for human beings and the cosmos as a whole. Christ has been placed 'above' all these powers not simply in a physical sense but in way that involves their subjugation. The text speaks as though this is something already achieved (see also Phil 2:9-11). But, of course, as we noted above in connection with First Reading, the forces hostile to God and to true humanity have by no means been fully overcome; the 'messianic program' has yet to run its course. Putting it all in the past as though already achieved is simply the text's way of projecting an act of hope. The hostile forces may still be around, but the Paschal victory of Jesus has dealt them a fatal blow. Preachers have to ask how themselves how to identify and name today the malign, transpersonal spiritual forces over which Paul saw Christ triumphant. The Ascension is not simply something that happened to Jesus – his departure, physically, from this world. It is the feast that celebrates the hope that evil and all that makes for dehumanisation and death in our world will not have the last word.

**MISSION TO THE WORLD.**

I have left little space to comment on the **Gospel**, taken from the final scene in Matthew (28:16-20), where the risen Lord sends out his disciples on mission to the nations of the world. Through baptism they are to draw those who respond in faith into the communion of love that is the Triune God. They are to instruct them in all the ways in which they themselves have received instruction from Jesus as set out in the gospel. Unlike Luke, Matthew does not portray Jesus departing from the earth. He who at his birth was named 'Emmanuel'—'God is with us' (1:23) – will remain 'Emmanuel' for his missionary Church till the end of time.

**Getting Ready to Pray.**

Ascension Thursday has mostly been transferred to the Sunday before Pentecost. So, this is most often Ascension Sunday! We prepare for celebrating the Eucharist by the way we live our previous "Holy Exchange." We pray to enjoy being believers. We pray to live as women and men who trust the spiritual gifts we have received beginning with Baptism and strengthened through Confirmation. We pray in the freedom of knowing who we are as gifts from God at this time and in this place.

We can pray as well with the quiet faith and presence of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Mary whose actions spoke louder than her words. We believe she is present in our "upper room" when we gather as Church. Her words are not recorded at Jesus' death nor his Resurrection, but she stayed faithful while she watched what she could not change. We too can pray for that same trusting of the mysteries.

**Some Thoughts**

The Acts of the Apostles, which is the scriptural history of the Holy Spirit's working in the early Church, shares with us a tender story ([First Reading](#)).

We hear from the first chapter about how the early eleven returned to Jerusalem to pray: the ones who had watched Jesus ascend. We hear their names and then the name of Mary with whom they gather to pray in the "upper room." That is all we hear, but there is much there.

There they all are in the former room of fear-and-hiding. They gather together in faith-and-finding. In the following verses they have to get down to busyness and business. They will have to find a successor to their fallen fellow-apostle, Judas Iscariot. That is in the future. What we hear is the group gathered together in faith, men and women, for the first time without his physical presence. Their prayer is not of terror, but hope.

Imagine this scene. They are all of the Jewish tradition which was strictly a male-first structure. So the men arrive back from Mount Olivet and there is Mary with other women waiting for them. Peter who knows his fragile past looks at Mary whose faithful past Peter also knows. So does Peter clear his throat and begin, as if nothing had happened, "Let us pray?" Mary had been ordained by the Holy Spirit to present the body and person of Jesus to the world. Not a cultic priest, Mary presided at the first sharing of his body by allowing him to share her body. Does Peter invite her to lead the prayers? Probably not, because that was not the tradition. This is such a tender time for them all.

The [Gospel](#) is a retrospect, a looking backwards in time. The scene is the "upper room" the night of His betrayal, arrest and personal sufferings. Jesus speaks to His Father on behalf of his little band of brothers. In the Gospel of John, Jesus on the cross is the supreme display of "glory." It is the final and ultimate "sign" of the "authority" which the Father has given him, the "authority" of extending eternal life to all who would believe in his being "sent."

Jesus prays for His followers who will remain in the "world" while Jesus is no longer in that same "world." Jesus, who was sent into the "world" as a gift, has given the gift of life to his Apostles and is praying that they would remain consecrated. The "world" who has hated him and who will hate them, is both a place and a spirit opposed to goodness. They will suffer for their beliefs as they will soon see him suffer through hatred. Peter's Epistle in our [Second Reading](#) reinforces this spirit. If we are "Christians" then we will suffer for the goodness of Christ life within us. Mary, Peter, the early Church and the late, John Paul II and you belong to the goodness of God freely offered and not always received. Mary is still giving us the nod which again means, "Let us pray." She who suffered for her faith until the Resurrection still welcomes us back to the community gathered together to receive Christ's continuous prayer over us in the Eucharist.