

Incarnation vs. Ascension
Ascension (A)
(Mt 28:16-20)

When children play, they invent a little world with their toys, and then by means of imagination enter and interact with that world. The computer age with its video capabilities gives even greater capability to create and interact with these “virtual realities.”

Man is made in the image and likeness of God, Who is the supreme imaginative child. But whereas the world that proceeds from the mind of man is only imaginative and “virtual,” the world that proceeds from the Logos of God is real. And whereas the actors in man’s worlds are merely dolls and action figures, or computer avatars, the actors in God’s created world are themselves godlike beings, able to think and choose for themselves. And whereas man can only enter his worlds by means of imagination, God literally enters His, becoming man in it.

The Bible reveals this grand project of God, a creation of his Mind, and one in which He enters and fully participates. But if this were not great enough, there is one more thing God accomplishes with His creation that a man could never achieve with any of his creations. He not only enters it, He brings it to His world, He allows it to enter Him.

When a child is finished playing, the reality ends. The toys are left scattered on the floor to be picked up and put away in the closet, the computer program is shut down. But God doesn’t end His project or cut it off from His awareness, that He might move on to something else. Instead, God, having united to Himself that creation by taking up the human nature, brings that creation in Himself, to the glory of the inner Divine Life of the Holy Trinity. The imaginative play-world of the child doesn’t follow him to the dinner table and join the rest of the family from that point on. But the world created through the Logos, and in which the Logos became Incarnate, does go with Him when He returns to the Father.

Today we celebrate the Ascension, which is not simply the ending of God’s adventurous journey in the creation of His Mind, but its permanent elevation into His own divine reality. Christianity is not just the truth of the Incarnation: God coming to man. It is the truth of the Ascension: man going to God. The Ascension following the Resurrection of Jesus, called by the Church his glorification, is the goal of the Incarnation. It is the goal of Creation itself.

The prayers for today’s liturgy remind us of this truth: “*The Ascension of Christ is our exaltation*” (Opening Prayer). “*May hope draw us onward to where our nature is united with [God]*” (Communion Prayer). “*He was taken up to heaven that he might make us sharers in his divinity*” (Preface II).

Today, as we contemplate Christ in glory at the right hand of the Father, let us recognize in him our humanity, and in his Ascension our destiny. Let us draw hope from this truth, that while still on earth, we are already united with him in heaven, and as the body draws life from the head, so we live by the divine life of God.