



MAY 21, 2023 | THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

HOLY FAMILY PARISH

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ST. ELIZABETH'S

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Pocahontas, VA 24635

ST. MARY'S

1122 Farmer Street
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ST. JOSEPH'S

1007 Independence Rd.
Grundy, VA 24614

Life without ascension is a disaster

DID YOU know that if Jesus did not physically ascend to heaven after the Resurrection, he would still be alive and moving around the earth for these past two thousand years? Jesus died once and is never to die again (Romans 6:10). In the Book of Revelation (1:18), the Lord himself declared: "I am the Living One. I was dead. But now look! I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys to Death and Hell."

Though it might sound exciting to still have our Lord Jesus Christ around our neighborhood thousands of years after the resurrection, his physical presence would potentially challenge and dispute some of the major prophecies and promises in the Scriptures concerning him.

We recall that our Lord Jesus Christ, addressing Mary Magdalene shortly after his resurrection, said: "Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and

tell them, 'I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17).

Why Jesus needed to Ascend to Heaven

Our Lord Jesus Christ started talking about the next important event after the Resurrection: the Ascension. Furthermore, after the Ascension, Jesus reaffirmed the next important event, namely the coming of the Holy Spirit: "I am going to send you what my Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

We can see from the preceding references that the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ is as important and indispensable as the other events in the calendar of his salvific mission on earth: the Incarnation, Passion and death, Resurrection, and the coming of the Holy Spirit, and not excluding the anticipation of the Second Coming (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Without the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ to heaven, the coming of the Holy Spirit would have been on hold. In one of the final instructions to his disciples, Jesus said: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John 16:7).

Why should we care about the Ascension of the Lord?

The question could be another way of exploring the importance of the Lord's ascension in our lives. Can you imagine a world where nothing ascends, but everything goes down? That would be absurd. So, even in the structuring of the cosmos, the divine intelligence factored in the possibilities of ascension.

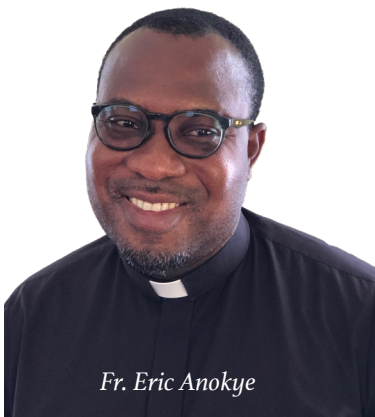
The spiritual importance of the Ascension is that as co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), we have been given the divine advantage to ascend. So, we cannot have an ascended Lord and remain descended in various areas of life.

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ indicates the fulfillment of his earthly mission. He accomplished his earthly assignment and did everything well (Mark 7:37). The Ascension serves as an alert, showing that the earthly mission of the Lord is completed and that the way is open for the Holy Spirit to come.

For us, the Ascension of the Lord is a signal to ascend the upper room and tarry with prayer until we receive the power from on high when the Holy Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost.

The Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ invites us to shift our attention from the distractions of this world and focus our attention on the things above where our ascended Lord sits at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1-2).

The Ascension further tells us that there is a place for us after our



Fr. Eric Anokye

earthly journey, as St. Paul would assure us that when our earthly tent is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands (2 Cor. 5:1). So, that ascension solidifies the words of Jesus that there are many rooms in his Father's house and that he is going to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3).

Moving Forward: You can also ascend!

Christianity is a product of the Lord's Ascension. Attentive to this reality, our lives as Christians should be an ascension project. Ascension tells each of us subjectively that nothing is impossible in the divine lexicon.

Though we might go through tough times, there may be bruises and even a casting down, but the Ascension of the Lord assures us that blessings shall come from our bruises and a lifting shall come from our casting down.

Like the Resurrection, the Ascension amplifies the victory over the limitations of death and the grave (I Cor. 15:54-55). So, we make bold to declare that through the ascension power of the Lord, we shall rise, increase, and bloom, and nothing else can stop us. We are also assured that the promise of the Father will come to us soon!

God bless you, and may you also ascend!



PASTOR

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OFFICE MANAGER/ BOOKKEEPER

Lydia St. Peter

OFFICE HOURS

Mon–Fri 9:30AM – 2:30PM

Please call the parish office to make arrangements for the **Sacraments of Baptism, Anointing of the Sick or Holy Matrimony** as well as funerals. **Reconciliation** is available from 30 minutes before a scheduled Mass.

MASS TIMES

SATURDAY

4PM – St. Joseph's

6PM – St. Mary's

SUNDAY

9AM – St. Elizabeth's

11:30AM – St. Theresa's

TUESDAY & FRIDAY

10AM – St. Theresa's

Cover image:

Gustave Doré, *The Ascension*,
1879

Walk Humbly with God

By Fr. Billy Swan, wordonfire.org



The third exhortation of the prophet Micah in his famous quote is to “walk humbly with your God” (6:8). The righteous person is asked by God to “act justly and love tenderly” but to do so in a dynamic way as we move forward along the path of life, accompanied by our God. This dynamic of movement is important, for it speaks of the bonds of communion with God growing stronger as we journey together. Our friendship with the Lord is not static but involves change, maturity, and advancement toward a goal or destiny.

In the Scriptures, this dynamic of walking with God appears very early in the Garden of Eden when we are told that Adam and Eve hid from their creator when they heard the sound of God “walking in the garden” (Gen. 3:8). As the people of Israel walked in the desert towards the promised land, it was a time when they were tested, formed, and led along the path that God marked out for them. And as they traveled, the Lord went ahead of them as “a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night” (Exod. 13: 21-22). As a pilgrim people, they understood the Lord as their shepherd who “guides me along the right path” (Ps. 23). On this journey, God gave Israel his law—not to restrict their freedom and joy but to secure it. These laws were given not in the spirit of slavish obedience but rather as a route to grow in love or “the way that the Lord has marked for you” (Deut. 5:33). Therefore,

the God who walks with his people is also the God who leads the way.

In the New Testament, Jesus is the Savior who “guides our feet in the way of peace” (Luke 1:79) as he invites those he chooses to “follow him.” He asks his disciples to “pick up their cross and come after me” (Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23) and promises that those who follow him will not “walk in the dark but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). In the Gospels, the promise of God to be with his people is always read with an important caveat—namely, that the Lord goes with us but also ahead of us on our journey. In one telling episode, Peter tries to persuade Jesus away from the path of suffering. Jesus’ rebuke of Peter to “get behind me Satan” (Matt. 16:23) can be read as telling him: “Get behind me, not in front of me. I must mark out the right path for you to follow. I must go first. Only then can you come after.” He is “the way” but also the One who leads the way (John 14:6).

Perhaps the best-known example of God walking with us in the person of Christ is found in the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. There, the risen Christ walks with his friends, even though they are walking the wrong way—away from Jerusalem. The Lord does this for a reason: so that through his closeness and the power of God’s word, the disciples might convert, turn around, and walk again on the right path. Here again, the metaphor of walking is

not abstract but describes the process of re-alignment to God's nature and purposes—his will, his mercy, truth, ways, and saving mission.

This is why the early disciples of Christ were known as “followers of the way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22) before they were known as “Christians.” To be a Christian then, as now, is to follow Christ along the path he takes us and to live a way of life marked by intimate and loving union with him. And through that union, we partake in the divine nature as the Spirit conforms our nature to his.

This ancient model of walking with Christ and behind Christ has been revived for the Church today by Pope Francis' advocacy of the synodal pathway. He wants Christians to live in closer proximity in the family of the Church, to become more fraternal, to move together, to grow in communion with God and one another, and to participate more fully in the mission of the Church. We are a Church community that is on the move, that goes forth, a pilgrim people on the march that goes out to meet the world with courage and confidence with a gift to offer. A healthy Church is like a river of water that moves and flows, for in the words of St. Catherine of Siena, “Love does not stay idle.”

This model of the Lord walking with us and yet before us is important. We are always tempted to make God in the image of who we think God should be instead of allowing God to be who he has revealed himself to be. We are tempted to conform the truth to ourselves instead of conforming ourselves to the truth. Therefore, keeping before us that Jesus is “the way” saves us from presumption and pride. That is why people like St. John Henry Newman prayed “Lead kindly light,” and why Fr. Walter Ciszek summed up his story with the title of his autobiography *He Leadeth Me*.

Finally, we are to walk humbly with our God. In the aftermath of Church scandals, it is often said that what we need is a more humble Church. If this means a Church that is contrite of her sins, perhaps less arrogant, complacent, or materialistic, then yes,

we need a humbler Church. But a humble Church that does not evangelize or have the courage to speak out and engage with the cultural issues of our time is not a humble Church but a dying Church. A humble Church has her feet on the ground but with one foot forward on the march, conscious of her mission from the Lord to go make disciples and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. A humble Church does not boast of herself but shares of the gift she has received with a world that has forgotten God.

Based on the Gospel, it is our conviction that the Church offers a broader, richer, and more coherent vision of life than the many alternative narratives on offer today that are confusing, spiritually poor and morally bankrupt. Regarding specific issues of social justice, life issues, marriage, family, sexuality, care for the environment and others, this is not a time for the Church to be timid or retreat into private and hidden spheres. It is not a time for the Church to lose its identity by dissolving itself in the surrounding culture. The Church is not called to imitate the culture but convert it. She needs to go forth and to “put out into the deep” by engaging courageously with modern culture in the market square. As a prophetic community we are called, not to fit in, but to stand out.

So, as we walk humbly with our God, may we have the courage to go beyond ourselves, to move out from shallow waters and to set sail on the open sea of mission. May the Good Shepherd lead us together as a Church along the way that leads to the Father's house, the destiny of our common journey and our final rest.

mass intentions

Date Intention

5/20 SATURDAY

4PM No Mass

6PM No Mass

5/21 SUNDAY

10AM Holy Family parishioners

11:30AM No Mass

stewardship of treasure

Donations Received as of May 14 (Week 46)		
CHURCH	ATTENDANCE	OFFERINGS
St. Joseph's	8	\$381
St. Elizabeth's	29	\$1,100
St. Mary's	15	\$610
St. Theresa's	49	\$2,073
Total	101	\$4,164
Outside Donations		\$895
Year to Date Received		\$138,010
Goal		\$123,846
Ahead/Behind Goal		+ \$14,164

OUTSIDE DONATIONS—THANK YOU!!

St. Francis, Staunton, VA: \$895

BUILDING FUND:

St. Joseph: \$70
St. Mary: \$300
St. Theresa: \$265

please pray for

Louise Serreno*
Gerry Hankins
Clarence Moore
Lexi Cox
Sarah Wall
Tammy Bennett
Margaret Wasilewski
Nic Ulate
Frannie & Rayburn Minton
Sue Bailey
Christian Lambert
Shane Neal
Archbishop John Kwofie
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Chris Jessie
Leo Brown
Carolina Ferrare
Junior Aiken
Jeanne Hash
Lara Marshall
Carol & Jim Shumate
Andrew Satmary
Glenn Harrison
Donna Petro
Christian Marshall
Tina Rocchetti
Alice Godin
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Kathy & Bob Buchanan, Randy Bolling, Doug Vance, Anne Danko, Jim Talbert, Jackie Shawver, Lydia St. Peter

parish news & events

St. Mary's Backpack Ministry is wrapping up its 12th year. This program provides nutritional food to sustain students through the weekends. 219 children were served this year. The Backpack Ministry is managed by volunteers and is funded through grants and donations. If you are interested in volunteering or making a donation, please contact the office at (276) 988-4626 or parishoffice@holyfamilyswva.org.



Fr. Eric with program founders, Cathy & Randy Bolling.



Backpack volunteers at work!

birthdays & anniversaries:

MAY 24: Harman Strong | **28:** Matthew French

“Go and teach all nations, says the *Lord*;
I am with you always, until the end of the world.”
- Mt 28:19a, 20b



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