

Ascension Day + 21st May 2020

A simple liturgy for use during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Today we celebrate Christ's ascension, when Jesus returned to be with his Father in heaven. This was the start of an exciting new stage of God's plan, which made it possible for Christ to be with us always. So rejoice, for Jesus will never leave or forsake us.

Light a candle. Sit for a few moments to gather your thoughts. Breathe deeply and slowly.

Gathering in God's Presence

This is your day and we shall praise you!
This is your day and we shall declare your name!
This is your day and we shall worship our risen,
ascended Saviour, Lord and King!

You are Lord of the heavens,
Creator of all, seen and unseen.
You reign over the nations,
seated on high upon your throne.
You draw all people to you,
bring sight to the blind, release closed minds.
You open your heart to us, forgive our sin, welcome us home.
You are Lord of the heavens,
Creator of all, worthy of our praise.
Amen.



*God mounts his throne
amid shouts of joy;
the Lord amid trumpet
blasts*

Prayer of Brokenness

Almighty God,
we confess that we have our eyes set in the clouds
instead of on the earth You have given us.

We desire heavenly treasure
but we keep believing that worldly means will help us attain it.

Forgive us for our short sightedness.
Draw us away from the temptations
to seek worldly power and measures of success,
and call us to the down-to-earth message of Your love,
to care for the needs of those around us.

You have called us through scripture
to care for the widows and orphans among us;
help us to see all those who are left out by society and are in need.

Help us to break down the dividing walls that we have placed,
so that we may truly be one, as You and Christ are one.
For it is in Christ's name we pray.
Amen.

Readings: Acts 1.1-11, Luke 24.44 – end

The image of Jesus in heaven can appear to imply that he is far away and uninterested in our lives. However, as the disciples' joy indicates (Luke 24.52), far from the ascended Christ being distant and unconcerned, he continues to actively care for us. Indeed, the book of Hebrews (7.25) describes Christ praying for us in heaven, while John's Gospel (14.2) talks of him preparing rooms for us in heaven.

From heaven he sent us his Holy Spirit, the ultimate example of his never-ending love. Jesus said that having his Spirit would be better than being physically with him. We may be tempted to doubt this, but the reality is that when Jesus was on earth, he was restrained by the limitations of his human body and could not be in two places at once. To help one person, he had to leave someone else. Now we can be assured that through his Spirit he lives within all Christians and is always with us, ready to help us whenever we ask. The Holy Spirit transforms us from within, so that we, like the disciples, no longer need be held back by our weaknesses and fears. The disciples had been too afraid to stand by Jesus when he was arrested, but they were transformed by his Spirit into leaders who were prepared to die for their faith. This same transforming Spirit lives in us, too, offering a fresh start and new hope.

Let's share, then, in the disciples' joy at the ascension – Christ is not gone but is with us for ever, wherever we are and whatever our situation. Nothing can ever separate us from his presence.

Prayers of Intercession

Christ is our advocate in heaven,
so let us approach God's throne of grace with boldness and offer up our prayers...

Pray for those who feel God is far away and unconcerned about them...
May they come to see how much God loves them.

Pray for those who have drifted away from God...
May they recognise once more how much they need their heavenly Father.

Pray for those who are suffering because of natural disasters and human tragedies...
May they know God's comforting presence close to them in their suffering.

Pray that our leaders may be guided by God in their decisions and have compassion for those they serve, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.

We thank you, heavenly Father, that we can offer up these prayers with confidence because we ask these things through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Closing Prayer

For the hope to which you call us,
imperfect though we are, we thank you, risen and ascended Christ.

For your willingness to accept us simply as we are,
we thank you, risen and ascended Christ.

Take our lives, transform us, bless us and revive us,
that we might better serve you as our king.

For the hope to which you call us,
imperfect though we are, we thank you, risen and ascended Christ. Amen.

