



CELEBRATING AT HOME
THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

*Called, chosen & sent
to be God's heart in the world (Matthew 28:16-20)*



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Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The Lord is here, present among us.

We are gathered with the whole Church in this moment of prayer.

Preparing to hear the Word

We have been called by God to be the Church,
the Body of Christ in this world.

We are not a building, but a people,
gathered and grounded in
**the Word of God,
the love of Christ,
and the unity of the Holy Spirit.**

God of life,
prepare us anew to be bearers of your Spirit.

Scripture Reading *(Matthew 28:16-20)*

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

Reflection - *Called, chosen, and sent to be God's heart*

The feast of the Ascension commemorates the return of Jesus to the Father. Jesus leaves in body but remains with us through the gift of the Spirit. We will celebrate the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit in next Sunday's feast of Pentecost.

The true meaning of our feast today is not found in Jesus' leaving, but in the way he calls his disciples back together, to re-form them as a new community

entrusted with the spread of the Gospel. Jesus sends the disciples out to make disciples of all nations, to baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and to teach them his way. But the disciples are not left to do all that on their own. Jesus promises that he is with them always.

Jesus has called the ragged, group of disciples, scattered after his crucifixion, back to himself to form them, fragile and doubtful as they are, into a community for mission in the name of God. It is comforting to recognise that Jesus doesn't insist on perfection before he calls us and entrusts us with his mission.

This mission is authorised by God and passed on to us through Jesus. It is not about authority over others. It is actually a call to act as God would act, true to God's heart as Jesus has taught us.

Ever since Easter, we have been proclaiming that Jesus is alive. The feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost help us to realise that we are part of a long tradition of faithful disciples. We have our faults and failings, but our call is to witness to and teach the way of Jesus by the kind of people we are, the values and attitudes we hold, in thought, word and action - to be the living presence of God in the world today.

Prayers of Intercession

Help us to prepare our hearts
for a fresh experience of your Spirit.

Help us transform darkness and pain,
by being your healing love.

May we cherish your love in our hearts
and be your love in the world.

You have chosen us as witnesses to your love,
keep us strong in faith and hope.

For all the followers of Jesus:
bring us to the unity for which Christ prayed.

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Lord's Prayer

Formed by the teaching and example of Jesus,
we pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done on earth
as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

Closing Prayer

Gracious God,
in the resurrection of Jesus
you share with us his risen life.
Transform our darkness, fear and isolation
with your comforting presence
so that we can be your calm, loving,
healing presence to each other.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Blessing

May your blessing be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our trust in you.

Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel, written about the year 85, is addressed to a community of converted Jews who lived in Syria-Palestine. They were going through a deep identity crisis concerning their past. When they accepted Jesus as the awaited Messiah, they continued to go to the synagogue and to observe the law and the ancient traditions. Moreover, they had a certain affinity with the Pharisees, and after the revolution of the Jews in Palestine against the Romans (65 to 72), they and the Pharisees were the only two groups to have survived the Roman oppression.

From the 80s, these Jewish brothers, Pharisees and Christians, only survivors, began to fight among themselves as to who had inherited the promises of the Old Testament. Each claimed to be the inheritors. Gradually, tension grew between them and they began to excommunicate each other. The Christians could no longer attend the synagogue and were cut off from their past.

Each group began to regroup: the Pharisees in the synagogue, the Christians in church. This added to the identity problem of the community of Jewish Christians because it raised serious questions in need of urgent solutions, like: Who has inherited the promises of the Old Testament, those of the synagogue or those of the church? On whose side is God? Who are really the people of God?

Now, Matthew writes his Gospel to help these communities overcome their crisis and to find an answer to their problems. His Gospel is, first of all, a Gospel of revelation showing how Jesus is the true Messiah, the new Moses, the culmination of the whole of the history of the Old Testament and its promises.

It is also the Gospel of consolation for those who felt excluded and persecuted by their Jewish brothers. Matthew wants to console and help them to overcome the trauma of the split. It is the Gospel of the new practice because it shows the way to achieve a new justice, greater than that of the Pharisees. It is the Gospel of openness and shows that the Good News of God that Jesus brought cannot be hidden, but must be placed on a lamp stand so that it may enlighten the life of all peoples.



Journey into the Light

This resource is presented by the Carmelites for use by individuals, families and small groups as a prayerful celebration of the Word of God to help prepare us to celebrate the Eucharist with our worshipping communities. We are conscious that Christ is present not only in the Blessed Sacrament but also in the Scriptures and in our hearts. We are also conscious of the many people who, for various reasons including sickness and infirmity, cannot physically attend the Eucharist. Even when we are on our own we remain part of the Body of Christ.

In the room you decide to use for this prayer you could have a lighted candle, a crucifix and the Bible. These symbols help keep us mindful of the sacredness of our time of prayer and can help us feel connected with our local worshipping communities.

This text is arranged with parts for a leader and for all to pray, but the leader's parts can be shared among those present.

As you use this prayer know that the Carmelites will be remembering in our prayer all the members of our family.



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