

## Faith in Five – Adults Ascension of Jesus Christ



1. **After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared as a real person and not as a 'ghost'.** Jesus appeared in His resurrected body, first appearing to Mary Magdalene and telling her not to hold on to him, as He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:16-17). To His disciples in Luke 24: <sup>37</sup> But they were startled and frightened and supposed that they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup> See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have".

Jesus ate and spent time with the disciples, opening their minds to understand the scriptures regarding everything written about Him. There was disbelief, joy and wonder among them as they were able to see Jesus and spend time with Him again! Jesus appeared to many other disciples during the forty days after the resurrection, speaking about the kingdom of God. He appeared to more than 500 of His followers at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

2. **What happened at the Ascension of Jesus Christ?** Jesus was taken bodily up to Heaven. He was with his disciples when He departed; was lifted up and carried into Heaven. (Luke 24: 52; Acts 1:9). Christ Jesus overcame death, and His mission was complete. His resurrection gives us the promise of eternal life; His ascension reassures us and gives us hope that after our time on earth, those faithful will be with Him in heaven for all eternity.

Jesus is preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3) – He waits for us! Not only did Jesus send us a Comforter but He tells us to remember that He will be with us always until the end of age (Matt 28:19-20). Jesus' disciples were so confident in His promise, they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, worshiping and giving praise to God.

3. **What day is the Ascension of Jesus Christ celebrated, Thursday or Sunday?** Forty days after Easter Sunday falls on a Thursday. Traditionally, Ascension is celebrated on a Thursday, but some dioceses have moved it to Sunday to allow more people to celebrate. Holy Days of Obligation may be transferred to a Sunday according to the ecclesiastical provinces (a collection of dioceses) with prior approval of the Apostolic See (Code of Canon Law #1246 §2).

Even if the liturgy for Ascension is moved to Sunday, we can still honor Ascension Thursday in a special way. As in other Holy Days of Obligation, we can meditate and pray. In Europe, one ancient custom for Ascension Day included consuming fowl (poultry) or bird shaped pastries because Christ 'flew' to Heaven. Another activity was to take a hike up a hill or mountain, to recall when Jesus took his disciples up to Bethany before He rose into Heaven as well as the actual ascension.

4. **In the Apostle's Creed, why did Jesus descend to the dead (or hell)?** In Jewish tradition and in early Christianity, it is believed that after death, all descend to the place of the dead or resting place of the soul (Sheol in Hebrew). The Catechism (633) teaches that

Jesus went to the abode of the dead to release the just who were there before His coming and to proclaim the Gospel to the dead (1 Peter 4:6).

He descended into hell so that we would never have to. Jesus endured the effects of sin/Hell on the cross – separation from God, darkness, pain and suffering. He stood in our place and took the judgment and wrath of God poured out against our sins.

In Ephesians 4:8 -<sup>8</sup> Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high, he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men."<sup>9</sup> (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?<sup>10</sup> He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things". Jesus fulfilled all things to the glory of God the Father, and is above all and under all, including the realm of the dead. At the Name of Jesus, every knee will bend - in heaven, on earth and under the earth (Philippians 2:10); every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and sea...everything will give praise, honor; glory and power to Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, Jesus Christ forever! (Revelation 5:13).

5. **In the creed, what does, "He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Almighty Father" mean?** In ancient times, the king would place his most powerful and favored one to his right hand. In Psalm 110:1, The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool." It is also seen in Mark 16:19: "So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God".

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states:

<sup>663</sup> Henceforth Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father: "By 'the Father's right hand' we understand the glory and honor of divinity, where he who exists as Son of God before all ages, indeed as God, of one being with the Father, is seated bodily after he became incarnate, and his flesh was glorified.

<sup>664</sup> Being seated at the Father's right hand signifies the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, the fulfillment of the prophet Daniel's vision concerning the Son of man: "To him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

6. **Jesus is with us!** Jesus promised He would be with us for all time. Christ is present to us in His Body, the Church. He is present in the liturgy when the Word is proclaimed – Jesus is the Word made flesh (John 1:1-2;14). As Catholics, we embrace the reality of Jesus' Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity in the consecrated Host. We receive His real presence in Holy Eucharist and are in His Presence during Eucharistic Adoration. He is with us through His power in our other sacraments. Jesus is with us when we come to worship Him and whenever we pray in His Name - "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Lord Jesus Christ, let us never be parted from you!

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