

FRIDAY OF THE ASCENSION

May 29, 2020

~ on this day, the holy Church calls upon us to resume the Fast of Wednesday and Friday, abstaining from flesh-meats, dairy, fish, wine & olive oil. ~



CHRIST HAS ASCENDED IN GLORY!

Canticle

God is gone up in jubilation, the Lord with the voice of the trumpet, to raise the fallen image of Adam, and to send the Comforting Spirit to sanctify our souls.



AT MORNING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Orthros

Omarvel never seen! For now our mortal nature ascendeth to the heavens, that nature now united to God the Word Omnipotent.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Even as Thou didst send Thy consubstantial Spirit to Thy divine disciples from heaven, so, O Christ, send Thy grace upon Thy people now.

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

O Lord, as Thou wast being taken up whence Thou wast now separated, the armies of Angels and of all the Incorporeals cried in exceeding gladness unto the Powers above: Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and the King of Glory shall enter in. For the cherubic throne took Thee up in the flesh. O Lord, glory be to Thee.

AT EVENING PRAYER

from the Pentecostarion, at Vespers

Unto the Mount of Olives camest Thou, Who hast mercy on the race of men. And a cloud took Thee up out of the sight of Thy disciples, who, although they trembled because of what they saw, yet rejoiced at their expectation of the Holy Spirit, in Whom do Thou make us steadfast, O Saviour, and have mercy on us.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Thou, O most Merciful, ascended to Thy Father, from whence Thou wast not parted, and lifted up our nature which lay below, O Sovereign Lord.

Both now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ our God, and gladdened Thy Disciples with the promise of the Holy Spirit, making them confident through the blessing that Thou art the Son of God, and Deliverer of the world.



LEO THE GREAT

Pope of Rome

†461

~ from his first homily on the Ascension of the Lord ~

AFTER THE BLESSED and glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ—by which the Divine Power raised up in three days the true Temple of God, which the wickedness of the Jews had destroyed—the sacred forty days, dearly-beloved, are today ended, which by divine appointment were devoted to our most profitable instruction. During this period of time, the Lord permitted His bodily presence to linger, so that our faith in the Resurrection might be fortified with needful proofs. For Christ's death had much disturbed the disciples' hearts, and a kind of stupor of distrust had crept over their grief-laden minds at His torture on the Cross, at His giving up the spirit, at His lifeless Body's burial. For, when the holy women, as the Gospel-story has revealed, brought word of the stone rolled away from the tomb, the sepulcher emptied of the Body, and the Angels bearing witness to the living Lord, their words seemed like ravings to the Apostles and other disciples. The Spirit of Truth would most assuredly not have permitted this doubtfulness—the result of human weakness—to exist in His own preachers' breasts, had not their trembling anxiety and careful hesitation laid the foundations of our faith. We are instructed by their seeing, we are taught by their hearing, we are convinced by their handling. Let us give thanks to the Divine management and the holy disciples' necessary slowness of belief. Others doubted, that we might not doubt.

Those days, dearly beloved, which intervened between the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension did not pass by in uneventful leisure; but rather great mysteries were ratified in them, deep truths revealed. In them the fear of awful death was removed, and the immortality not only of the soul but also of the flesh established. In them, through the Lord's breathing upon them, the Holy Spirit was poured upon all the Apostles. Then it was that the Lord joined the two disciples as a companion on the road, sweeping away all the clouds of their uncertainty and upbraiding them with the slowness of their fearful hearts. Their enlightened hearts caught the flame of faith and, lukewarm as they were, were made to burn while the Lord unfolded the Scriptures. In the breaking of bread, also, their eyes were opened as they dined with Him.

And in the course of these and other miracles, when the disciples were distressed by bewildering thoughts and the Lord had appeared in their midst and said, "Peace be unto you,"—that what was passing through their hearts might not be their fixed opinion (for they thought they saw a spirit, not flesh)—He refuted their thoughts so discordant with the Truth, offered to the doubters' eyes the marks of the Cross that remained in His hands and feet, and invited them to handle Him with careful scrutiny, because the traces of the nails and spear had been retained to heal the wounds of unbelieving hearts, so that not with wavering faith but with most steadfast knowledge they might comprehend that the Nature which had been laid in the sepulcher was to sit on God the Father's throne.

Accordingly, dearly beloved, throughout this time which elapsed between the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, God's Providence had this in view: to teach and impress upon both the eyes and hearts of His own people that the Lord Jesus Christ might be acknowledged to have truly risen, just as He was truly born, suffered, and died. And hence the most blessed Apostles and all the disciples, who had been both bewildered at His death on the Cross and doubtful in believing His Resurrection, were so strengthened by the clearness of the truth that when they saw the Lord ascending to the heights of heaven, not only were they merely freed from all trace of sorrow but were even filled with great joy. And truly great and unspeakable was their cause for joy, when—in the sight of the holy multitude—the Nature of mankind went up, to pass above the Angels' ranks and to rise beyond the Archangels' heights, to reach the right hand of the Father, where It is set with Him in the throne of glory, united to His Nature, in the Son. Since, therefore, Christ's Ascension is our uplifting, let us exult, dearly beloved, with worthy joy and delight in the loyal giving of thanks. For today not only are we confirmed as possessors of paradise, but we have also, in Christ, penetrated the heights of heaven, and have gained still greater things—through Christ's ineffable grace—than we had lost through the devil's malice. For the Son of God has made us—whom our virulent enemy had driven out from the bliss of our first abode—members of Himself and placed us at the right hand of the Father, with Whom He lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

