

Sunday May 16th, 2021, The Ascension of Our Lord

Good Morning from St. Bernadette's.

I hope everyone is keeping safe and well, and following all the guidance we receive to overcome these strange times, and continuing to pray for all our needs at this time.

And so it is that on our Eastertide journeys to Pentecost we stop of at the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord, this year as recorded in the Gospel of St. Mark 16:15-20

The scene of Christ's Ascension into heaven is typical of St. Mark. He uses the scene to remind us all of the mission of Christ given to the apostles, and concludes by placing Jesus in heaven, yet continuing to work with his apostles, confirming his message by the many signs and miracles that did indeed accompany the apostles preaching.

There's very much an excitement to scene, a sense of the Church moving forward into a new era; a new era of great growth and development as many people are baptised; an era of hope and mystery, as miracles are performed, and the message of Jesus is confirmed; and an era in which the love of Jesus is consistently shown, as, although he has returned to heaven, he continues to watch over his Church.

And whilst the apostles themselves had to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, in omitting this waiting period, Mark cleverly pitches us forward into our era, the era of the Church, the era of the body of Christ.

As we celebrate the day on which Christ returned to heaven, we should perhaps try and experience and rekindle a little of the joy and excitement and enthusiasm which is shown to us in this Gospel. If we can place ourselves the position of the apostles, then we can see that there is much work to do in the Church, with many gifts to be shared, many people to be healed, and countless more to be baptised and to come to full knowledge of the truth. As at the time of Jesus' ascension, it is the people whom he has called and chosen and taught to preach his word who have this vital and important work to do. Today it is us who have to ensure that the ascension of Jesus Christ is not an end, but a new hopeful beginning, always conscious that from heaven the Lord will guide us, working in us and through us, as the era of the Church continues its exciting journey, until she too takes her place with God in heaven.

*Gladden us with holy joys, almighty God,
and make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving,
for the Ascension of Christ your Son is our exaltation,*

*and, where the Head has gone before in glory,
the Body is called to follow in hope.
We thank you for allowing us to celebrate this feast
which reminds us of this going of You before us to heaven.
We long to join you in the gift of everlasting life
which you gained for us in your self-giving death and resurrection.
Allow us to serve your people until the day when we celebrate together
the joy of your Kingdom,
where you live and reign forever and ever.
Amen.*

‘Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!’ would make a great Eastertide, Ascension to Pentecost Hymn for today.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wh61poqcnpA>

Lovely to see lots of people at Mass over this weekend, and hopefully as restrictions get us back to the new normal we are seeing great glimmers of hope.

*Father,
Thank you that in a world of despair,
You are our Hope.
In a world of darkness,
You are our Light.
In a world of sorrow,
You are our joy.
Help us to share the Hope of our hearts with one another
Enable us to give Hope to others through Your work amongst us
Use us to transform our nation and to spread Your Hope to every corner of this nation.
May our land flourish by the preaching of Your word and the praising of Your name.
In Jesus Name. Amen.*

So, time for our Ascension Day Quiz! Grab a pen, grab a cup of coffee and a slice of cake (maybe even ‘Scripture Cake’) and see how well you do with the following questions! Answers at the end of the Message!

1. In how many and which of the historic creeds of the Church is the Ascension affirmed?
 - A. Two: the Nicene and Athanasian
 - B. Two: the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds
 - C. Three: the Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian Creeds
 - D. None: the Creeds were concerned with theological, not historical, matters

2. What is the liturgical colour most often associated with Ascension Day in the Western Church?

- A. Green
- B. Purple
- C. Red
- D. White

3. Is the Feast of the Ascension always and everywhere observed on the 40th day after Easter?

- A. No, sometimes it is celebrated on June 15.
- B. No, sometimes it is kept on the 7th Sunday of Easter.
- C. Yes, as this is the historically accurate date.
- D. No, sometimes it is kept on the 49th day after Easter.

4. Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, a 5th Century poet and bishop, wrote a poem entitled 'Salve, festa dies' which has been variously translated. Versions of this hymn are sung on Easter Day, Ascension Day and Pentecost. Which of the following lines is sung on Ascension?

- A. Day when our risen Lord / Rose in the heavens to reign.
- B. Day when the Holy Ghost / Shone in the world full of grace.
- C. Day when our Lord was raised / Breaking the kingdom of death.
- D. Day when our God showed forth / The power of His mighty hand.

5. How did Ascension Island, located in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean, get its name?

- A. It was named by botanists after the fern *Pteris adscensionis* which grows there.
- B. It was discovered in 1503 by Alphonse d'Albuquerque on Ascension Day.
- C. It was named after Mount Ascension, the volcanic peak responsible for its existence.
- D. NASA named it because of the powerful radar array located there to track the ascent of rockets launched from the South Eastern United States.

6. The Gospel according to Saint Luke says the Ascension occurred in the vicinity of Bethany (Luke 24:50-51). Where does the Acts of the Apostles say it happened?

- A. Mount Sinai
- B. Galilee
- C. The Mount of Olives
- D. Mount Zion

7. In which of Shakespeare's plays does a character speak the following lines? 'Is this Ascension-day? Did not the prophet say that before Ascension-day at noon my crown I should give off? Even so I have: I did suppose it should be on constraint: But, heaven be thank'd, it is but voluntary.'

- A. Henry V
- B. Richard II
- C. King John
- D. Richard III

8. There is a long-standing custom in England of 'beating the bounds' on (or near) Ascension Day. What is involved?

- A. Marking the limits of the field where cricket matches will be played during the summer.
- B. Pummelling everyone with the misfortune to have the surname of Bounds.
- C. Processing around the parochial boundaries, pausing for prayer at particular landmarks.
- D. Threshing stalks of wheat (and other grains) which have been bound together into stooks for drying in the fields.

9. Salvador Dali painted a painting called 'The Ascension of Christ.' What feature of Christ's body is most prominent in this painting?

- A. His wounded side
- B. His head
- C. His feet
- D. His smile

10. Which of these Ascension Day food custom(s) is/are factual?

- A. Italians brought beans and grapes to the church to be blessed by the priest.
- B. Armenians made dolmas - stuffed grape leaves.
- C. Amish in the United States went fishing.
- D. All of these are actual Ascension Day customs.

We have all been touched by the death of little Jordan Banks, and from 2pm this Sunday (today) there is going to be a celebratory convoy on the prom, starting at Norbreck castle, to raise money for charity in his name. You may wish to go out and show your support, and I may see you out there this afternoon. Once again, please keep Jordan's family in your prayers.

Tobias, the Presbytery Cat, has given us several example of chilling out throughout the past year, but one of my Australian family's cats, Gigi (the other is called Kevin), today gives us an abject lesson in how to truly chill out in front of the fire. Now *that's* relaxing!

This weekend's masses are on the YouTube channel, and let's look forward to celebrating Pentecost next Sunday. Have a beautiful day.

Once again many thanks for all your return mails. Apologies if I don't reply immediately, sometimes they seem to get lost (or kind of bunched up). Any suggestions for ways to keep our faith and spirits up at this time are most welcome!

And remember, St. Bernadette's is not closed. We're just doing things differently for a while, until we are allowed to gather together once more, more stronger, more faithful, more loving, more creative, and more grateful for the amazing community that is St. Bernadette's.

With love and faith in Jesus.

Fr. P.

Ascension Quiz Answers: 1.C; 2.D; 3.B; 4.A; 5.B; 6.C; 7.C; 8.C; 9.C; 10.D.