

# Opening Reflections for Committees: May 2018

Witness and Fellowship Ministry Team

## The Ascension of Our Lord

While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. (Luke 24:51-52)

Jesus returned to His Father. That means He left His disciples (at least, He visibly left them). So, why would the disciples return to Jerusalem “with great joy”? Why would they celebrate the ascension, if it means not seeing their Lord again? There are lots of reasons to celebrate. First, only Jesus’ visible or local presence was taken from them. Jesus is still with His Church. “I am with you always...” (Matthew 28:20). After all, Jesus is truly God. He’s everywhere. More importantly, He is wherever the Word is preached. His Body and Blood are hidden under the bread and wine given to us in the Sacrament. Jesus isn’t really gone.

Second, Jesus ascended into heaven to send the “promise of the Father,” and the “power from on high.” Jesus returns to the Father to send His Church the Holy Spirit. Ascension prepares us for Pentecost.

Third, Jesus’ ascension is Jesus’ exaltation. Jesus claimed to be the King of God’s People and the Lord of creation. For this, He was crucified. God raised Him from the dead, vindicating Jesus and reversing the unjust verdict made by human courts. God exalted Jesus, giving Him a throne by His side, so that He may rule over all creation. As Jesus said to His disciples, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me” (Matthew 28:18). Today the Church celebrates the heavenly coronation of God’s Son. Jesus has overthrown the prince of this world and He rules as King.

Finally, it should be noted that we share in Christ’s exaltation. Jesus will descend from heaven someday. He will raise us from the dead and He will exalt us. In other words, we will rule over the new creation alongside Jesus, for this has been man’s destiny since the beginning: “Subdue [the earth] and have dominion” (Genesis 1:28) and, “[God’s people] will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).

We pray that this Ascension Day fills us with great joy, just as it did the first disciples. In the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.