



# ABOUT THE PROPERS

*An Explanation of the Variable Parts of the Divine Service*



## Ascension of Our Lord

May 18, 2023



### He Lives to Rule All Things for the Church

The ascension marks the completion of Jesus' earthly mission, but it does not signify the end of his work. While on earth, Jesus had set aside so much of his divine power. But Jesus now picks all that power back up again. He ascended to exercise his limitless authority for the Church as we carry out our mission to be Christ's ambassadors of grace to the world. He lives! And he is in absolute and perfect control, ruling over Creation for the eternal well-being of the Church. The Festival of the Ascension is one of the oldest and most joyful celebrations in the Christian Church. It will be observed by Christians until Christ returns to take us to be with him.

### The Propers

*The Propers are those portions of the service that change (i.e. are "proper" to) each Sunday or season of the church year. The Propers differ from the Ordinary (from the Latin ordo, which means "regular order") portions of the liturgy, which do not change (e.g. the Lord's Prayer). The Propers offer the variety to the worship service and emphasize particular worship themes throughout the liturgical calendar.*

#### **First Reading**<sup>1</sup>

Acts 1:1-11

The weeks of Easter had been filled with breathless joy in the presence of their living Savior. For forty days the disciples listened to Christ speak about the kingdom of God. All that kingdom talk whetted their appetite for power and authority. They had seen their Savior suffer; now they were ready to see him win. Jesus offered them the tantalizing promise of something greater than John's baptism, whom he had called the greatest man even born. What could it be? What heights of power and authority were waiting now that Jesus reigned as God and Lord? And so, because of that, they asked him a question that makes us marvel. Verse 6 displays the depth of their culturally ingrained misunderstanding of Messiah: they certainly had spiritual hopes for Jesus, but even at this late date they could not divorce them from their expectations of an earthly kingdom. Christ's answer gives direction for the Church of all time. They would get power, but not for an earthly kingdom. Rather, they would receive Spirit-power to be heralds of the impending kingdom of heaven.

#### **Second Reading**<sup>1</sup>

Ephesians 1:15-23

The post-ascension disciples no longer had their teacher with them walking the roads of Israel as before. We end-time disciples do not have Jesus' visible presence with us either. Yet there is no ascension sadness, because the Church knows exactly where Christ is. He has taken up his power and has begun to reign with might that knows no limit and glory that knows no bounds. With a head like that, what foe have we to fear?

#### **Gospel**<sup>1</sup>

Luke 24:44-53

Ascension marks the coronation of our Prophet-Priest as King. Today we see his enthronement in glory and power to rule all things for the Church. Even at this late date, the disciples failed to understand Jesus' mission. So Christ opened the Scriptures to them to show once more that this was the Christ as prophesied. He told them, "This was the way it had to be! And you, you are now well-informed witnesses of the fact that I am both Lord and Christ." Finally, his disciples understood: Christ is God. There was no more doubting, no more fearing, no more worry. Christ is God. They worshipped the God-Man and watched him depart with his hands raised in unending

blessing. No wonder they went home rejoicing! No longer would they hide behind locked doors; no longer would they cower; no longer would they fear the Sanhedrin. Instead they would fill the temple with public praise, because Christ is God! Their rabbi, their friend, their brother...he was God and ruled all things for his Church.

**Psalm of the Day**                      Psalm 47 A

“God Had Gone Up with a Shout.” Jesus, the King of all, ascends to his heavenly throne amid shouts of joy. We join with the angel choirs to sing the praise of our risen and ascended Lord.

**Gospel Acclamation**                      Matthew 28:20

“Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Christ’s words of promise to his disciples before he ascended are fulfilled in his gracious presence among believers in the Word and Sacraments.

**Prayer of the Day**

Lord Jesus, King of glory, on this day you ascended far above the heavens, and at God’s right hand you rule the nations. Leave us not alone, we pray, but grant us the Spirit of truth that, at your command and by your power, we may be your witnesses in all the world; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Hymn of the Day**                      472 “A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing” (The Venerable Bede, 673-735)

**Church Year Season** <sup>1</sup>                      Easter

After forty days of repentance and prayer, the Church bursts forth in jubilant praise at the Resurrection of our Lord. The alleluias and glorias which were muted for Lent ring out again as the Bride of Christ welcomes her Bridegroom back from the dead. Easter is as the pinnacle of the Church Year, the oldest festival and season celebrated by the worshipping Church. For a full week-of-weeks (49 days) the Church celebrates the resurrection of Christ on the Sundays of Easter which culminate on the 50th day, Pentecost.

**Traditions & Customs**                      The Paschal Candle

Paschal, meaning "having to do with the Passover," is a word associated with Easter. It was at the conclusion of the Jewish Passover Festival (the "Pasch") that Jesus rose from the dead and proved himself to be the true Passover Lamb whose blood removes sin and death (Ex 12; 1 Cor 6:6-8). The candle is lit for services during Easter to symbolize that Christ is alive and lives among us. The candle is also lit for Baptisms and funerals, reminding us of our resurrection to eternal life.

**Colors & Symbolism**                      Easter: White

White is the color of our Triune God and heaven. It also symbolizes joy, celebration, gladness, light, purity and innocence. We receive these blessings through faith because Christ, our righteousness Savior, has forgiven all our sins.

**Nain Paraments**                      Easter

Superfrontal: *Alleluia* is taken from a Hebrew word which means, “Praise the LORD.” It is a word of joy and gladness and most commonly used in the Psalms (e.g. 103). An ancient custom is to refrain from using the term during Lent in order to distinguish the penitential nature of that season from the joy and hope filled nature of the Easter season that follows. The vines and vegetation branching out from the *Alleluia* represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

Lectern antependium: The doves flying in front of the cross represent purity, innocence (Matthew 10:16), as well as spiritual and eternal rest (Psalm 55:6). When the dove has an olive branch or leaf in its beak, it is a symbol of hope and peace (Genesis 8:11). Each of these blessings and more come by Jesus’ death on the cross and through the gift of faith (Galatians 1:3,4).

Pulpit antependium: The cross is formed by the Greek letters Chi (X) and Rho (P). Chi and Rho are the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ (Χριστός). This ancient symbol represents Jesus and his office as the Messiah, the anointed King of kings and Savior of the world (Matthew 16:16). The vines and vegetation branching out from the cross represent the spiritual life that Jesus, the vine brings to God’s children, the branches (John 15:5).

<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year A”. Jonathan E. Schroeder, Author.  
<sup>2</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year B”. Daniel M. Deutschlander, Author.  
<sup>3</sup> Courtesy of “Planning Christian Worship: Year C”. Joel J. Gawrisch, Author.  
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