



**15 Jesus showed himself to the Eleven, and said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation. 16 He who believes and is baptised will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned. 17 These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; 18 they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink**

**deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.'**

**19 And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven: there at the right hand of God he took his place, 20 while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.**

Other readings: Acts 1:1-11 Psalm 46 (47) Ephesians 4:1-13

On this feast of the Ascension of the Lord we hear two accounts of the departure of Jesus. Our gospel reading gives the final verses of the Gospel of Mark. The eleven disciples are sent out by Jesus to the whole world and to preach to all creation. There is to be no limit to the delivery of the Christian good news. Those who accept the message with faith will receive salvation, and power to perform extraordinary signs. They will have the gift of healing, and they will be protected from all harm. The gospel concludes with the words that Jesus 'was taken up' The feast of the Ascension completes the mystery of the Resurrection by telling us that Jesus is now with the Father. He returns to the place from which he came, but he returns with our humanity. Human nature sits in God's presence.

Our first reading, from the opening verses of the Acts of the Apostles, also tells of the Ascension of the Lord. This version of the story includes Jesus' promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit, who will bring power from on high. This reading too speaks of the mission of the disciples: in Jerusalem, throughout Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The reading speaks of 'two men in white' who explain the departure of Jesus. This Jesus, who has gone to be with the Father, will return, they say, 'as you have seen him go'.

While the gospel reading stresses the gifts given to faith-filled disciples, our reading from Acts informs us that this power comes from the Holy Spirit, the Spirit received at Pentecost. It also encourages us to look to the return of Jesus. Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

*What does the feast of the Ascension say to all Christians?*

*Take note of how the two accounts of the Lord's departure complement each other.*

*We pray for an understanding of how deeply our humanity is valued by God.*

*We pray that we may treasure the humanity of all, particularly the poor and the lost.*