

# Feast of the Ascension

## Cycle A-2026

The Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven is a big deal! Do you know why? Through His Ascension, Jesus Christ unlocked the gates of heaven for the faithful of both the old and new covenant. That includes us. Even though they have been unlocked, we do not receive automatic entry. We are called to make a daily decision to unlock the door of our hearts for Jesus Christ. In we persevere in doing so, we are eventually able to enter into heavenly joy.

Jesus Christ, the God-man, through His life and earthly ministry, shows us THE WAY. In fact, He is the Way. It is the way of a daily relationship with God. It is the way of daily discipleship. It is the way of humble service. It is the way of living and sharing God's saving truth. It is the way of sacrificial love. It is the way of faithfulness. It is the way of mercy and forgiveness. The WAY is best captured in the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John: "I have not come to do My own will, but the will of the

One who sent me.” It is this type of free, personal surrender to God, and His will, that enables us to proclaim with a living faith at the end of our lives: “Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit.”

As we commend ourselves to God in death, a whole new world is unlocked for us in the eternal realm. The Sacred Scriptures provide us with some very beautiful, intimate, inspiring, and comforting images of heaven. Jesus Christ reveals heaven as the Father’s House. One amazing aspect of this revelation is that God has a place personally prepared for us. We will experience heaven as an encounter with God in which we feel uniquely welcomed loved, and treasured. In the most profound and intimate of ways, we will experience our full dignity as the children, friends, and beloved of God. The Father’s House is the ultimate House of Love.

In my favorite image, Jesus Christ reveals heaven as a banquet or feast. This is the imagery of joy, laughter, pleasure, and total satisfaction. Most of all, it is the language of relationship, community, and communion. We will be united in, and united by, the

reality that we are all the family of God. We will experience the ultimate community as being part of the communion of saints, and the entire communion of heaven, whenever you factor in the angels. Together as family, we will offer eternal praise, worship, adoration, and thanksgiving to God. Rooted in the Holy Trinity, and for the glory of the Holy Trinity, our joy will be loving and serving God together, as the family of all families.

The Sacred Scriptures reveal that in heaven there is no sorrow or pain of any kind. Because of the way life has unfolded for us, and sometimes due to our free will decisions, we carry painful crosses of body, mind, heart, and soul. Once we cross the eternal threshold, and enter into the Father's House, all sorrow, pain, and brokenness are instantaneously healed. We are fully and forever whole. And as St. Paul reminds us, "to degree we have shared in the sufferings of Christ, is the degree we will share in his glory." Our earthly sufferings, handled in a spirit of faith, hope, and love, help determine the degree of our interpersonal union and intimacy with God, in heaven. With God, nothing

is ever in vain, especially our suffering. May we try to always remember that.

While hanging on the cross, Jesus reveals another remarkable image of heaven when He says to the repentant thief: “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” Paradise is the language of tranquility, peacefulness, relaxation, fulfillment, and overwhelming beauty and splendor. As St. Paul proclaims: “Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it dawned on the human heart, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

The final image of heaven is more speculative, but it really makes sense if you reflect on it. The modern person tends to view heaven as stagnate and boring. We have this image that in heaven all we do is pray and worship God. Listen closely, we will do those things, and we will absolutely love it. We will do it wholeheartedly. It will be the ultimate joy of our soul. Yet the reality is that prayer and worship are part of a bigger whole. Heaven is dynamic, exciting, and ever-unfolding. In addition to all the wonderful images I have shared with you, we continue to evolve, not in

that we become “more holy,” but that we continually grow in knowledge. It is the ever-unfolding knowledge of God, other people, ourselves, all of creation, and the mysteries of the universe. This knowledge brings us deeper joy and a greater love for God and all that He has made. In our souls we will proclaim: “Heaven and earth are filled with Your glory.” We are forever filled with a spirit of “awe and wonder” as we delight in the wisdom and glory of God, which can never be exhausted.

There is also service and work in heaven. St. Therese of the Little Flower seemed to have spiritually intuited this whenever she wrote: “I will spend my heaven doing good on earth.” Even though invisible to the human eyes, heaven and earth are always fully interconnected. If only our spiritual eyes could see!

May our commitment to following Jesus Christ and His Way, unlock for us the gates of heaven in all of its endless awesomeness, variety, and ever unfolding vitality. In doing so, we experience our own Ascension, made possible by Jesus’s Ascension. He has prepared the way for us. With the beating of His human and

divine heart, He eagerly longs to embrace us in His everlasting arms. May the glories of heaven wet our appetite for Jesus Christ and eternal life.