



# Bringing Home the Word

Ascension of the Lord (A)

May 21, 2023

## Where Are You Looking?

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Are we, like the disciples, looking in the wrong direction? As they looked up to heaven, they probably realized what they had lost. Jesus was no longer in their midst. But then, the Easter stories all tell us that they never really understood his risen presence with them. And so they were asked: “Why are you standing here looking at the sky?” (Acts 1:11).

Are we also looking up to heaven when we should be looking out to the world? Of course, it is right that we reflect on Jesus’ ascension. However, today’s understanding of the universe

helps us realize that the biblical account of Jesus’ ascension into heaven may be a way of saying that he is glorified with God. As Paul says, he has been granted the place of honor at God’s right hand, “far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion” with “all things beneath his feet” (Ephesians 1:21–22). Jesus, now with God, radiates the full splendor of his resurrection.

We must turn to the Gospel passage to get the fullness of the story of the ascension. Jesus did not say: “Watch what is going to happen.” Instead he told them to go out: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). We might know these words so well that we miss their forcefulness. In effect, Jesus is telling them: go out to the whole world and tell them what you have seen and heard. I did what it was for me to do; now it is up to you to do the rest. Don’t worry, “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). Look where you’re going, not where I went. †

**Turn to the Gospel passage in Matthew to get the fullness of the story of the ascension.**

### A Word from Pope Francis

We must ask the Lord...to grant us the gift of wisdom, that wisdom of God that teaches us to see with God’s eyes, to feel with God’s heart, to speak with God’s words. And so, with this wisdom, let us go forward, let us build our family, let us build the Church....

GENERAL AUDIENCE, ROME,  
APRIL 9, 2014



## Sunday Readings

### Acts 1:1–11

As they were looking on, [Jesus] was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight.

### Ephesians 1:17–23

And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

### Matthew 28:16–20

[Jesus said,] “Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit.”

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Have I ever missed a blessing because I was too busy looking elsewhere?
- Do I turn my blessings into burdens?

# A Formula for Contentment

By Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR

Next week we celebrate Pentecost Sunday. On the day of Pentecost, the giddy disciples of Jesus were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak about the mighty acts of God in various tongues. “They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others said, scoffing, ‘They have had too much new wine.’ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, ‘You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words. These people are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning’” (Acts 2:12–15).

*Alleluia!* The word itself is so peculiar it sounds like we’re either speaking in tongues, babbling like a child, or inebriated. *Hallelujah* is a transliteration of two Hebrew terms meaning, “Praise the Lord!” It’s an attempt to express our inexpressible happiness after a sobering Lenten season. “In the presence of the mystery that we celebrate on Easter, the mystery of our redemption, our usual intelligible vocabulary is inadequate; when faced with the super abundant mercy of God we can only stammer in amazement like children,” wrote



Balthasar Fischer in *Signs, Words, and Gestures* (Pueblo Publishing Co., 1981).

Yet, the sheer repetition of *Alleluia* throughout the Easter season won’t instill happiness in the one uttering it, if a personal experience of God’s profound love and mercy is lacking. How can our ecstatic hearts keep from singing *Alleluia*, if to know God is to feel elation? This, of course, begs the question: What makes us happy?

On a trip to Tokyo in 1922, Albert Einstein discovered he was without money to tip a bellboy. Sensing the gravity of the faux pas, he scribbled a formula for happiness on a piece of paper—not as famous as his  $E = mc^2$ —but isn’t it all relative? His handwritten

note read: “A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness.” Last year, the note sold for \$1.56 million at an auction in Jerusalem.

Is there a secret formula for happiness? According to Earnie Larsen, “The two deepest desires most people have are: to love and be loved and to believe they are worthwhile and know someone else believes that also. In other words, to be happy we need someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to.” Happiness, then, isn’t winning a few bucks in the lottery. It’s playing ball with your grandson. Happiness isn’t determined by our number of friends on Facebook, but in befriending our Redeemer who tied a towel around his waist, poured water into a basin, and washed his disciples’ feet. After performing this service, the master-turned-attendant tipped us with a formula for contentment: “I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (John 13:15). †



*Lord Jesus, show us where to look for you and open our eyes to recognize your presence among us, we pray. Amen! Alleluia!*

The Redemptorists

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## WEEKDAY READINGS

May 22–27

### Monday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 19:1–8 / Jn 16:29–33

### Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 20:17–27 / Jn 17:1–11a

### Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 20:28–38 / Jn 17:11b–19

### Thursday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 22:30; 23:6–11 / Jn 17:20–26

### Friday, St. Philip Neri:

Acts 25:13b–21 / Jn 21:15–19

### Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 28:16–20, 30–31 / Jn 21:20–25