**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for May 16, 2021**

**Solemnity of the ascension of our lord**

**“Through you comes peace and justice for all who are oppressed.” Ps. 103**

**CHECK-IN** and then Betty mutes everyone. **(Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Betty Thompson)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Judy Sholes and Maryann Dolan for preparing today’s communal prayer and Reggie Ott for making our music.
* Thanks also to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Judy Sholes, George and Alicia Urban, Dan McCarthy, Kate Monagan, Mary Ott, Sister Marie McCarthy, Pat Gabig, Sister Grace Hartzog, and George Fulk.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Betty)**

Let’s quiet ourselves so we can be attentive to what God hopes for us today. Be still. Center yourself in the love of God and of one another. Notice your breath as it goes in and out…. Let it slow and deepen… and fill you with the peace of Christ. We begin with 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together… and one to welcome in the Spirit who never leaves us.

Now Reggie Ott will lead us into our prayerful song together, “Open My Eyes.”

**OPENING SONG** Open My Eyes by Jesse Manibusan **(Reggie)**

Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see your face.
Open my eyes, Lord,
Help me to see.

Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear your voice.
Open my ears, Lord,
Help me to hear.

Open my heart, Lord
Help me to love like you.
Open my heart, Lord,
Help me to love.

And the first shall be last

And our eyes are opened
And we'll hear like never before
And we'll speak in new ways
And we'll see God's face in places we've never known.

I live within you,
Deep in your heart, O Lord.
I live within you,
Rest now in me.

**GREETING (Betty)**

Let us rejoice, for Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven and his faithful love rules over all the earth. Alleluia! Alleluia!

All: Alleluia! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP / GATHERING PRAYER** **(Betty)**

We come together today to remember Jesus and to celebrate his ascension into heaven. While he was on earth, Jesus showed us how to live a life of love and service. May we focus on the many ways we can help build a Kingdom…or Kin-dom of love.

Loving God, open our eyes so we might see your face; open our ears to hear your voice; and open our hearts so that we might love like you.

 Judy Sholes will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Judy)**

Today, we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus into heaven, which marks the conclusion of Jesus’ time on earth. Jesus’ ascension also marks the beginning of his disciples’ mission to go forth to spread the Good News. Last week, we heard that the early church began to understand that God dwells in all people, and Baptism seals recognition of this presence. This week, Jesus instructs his disciples to spread this message to all.

 In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus tells the disciples that they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. He then tasks them to be witnesses for him to the ends of the earth, reinforcing once again that all people are part of the Kin-dom.

The Gospel reading today is from the end of Mark’s gospel, the 16th chapter verses 15 through 20. Catholic Scripture scholars concur that these verses and others were added by someone else, who might have preferred a more satisfactory ending. Mark ended his Gospel with the women fleeing the empty tomb out of fear, likely in order to goad his community to proclaim the Gospel or to admit that they would cower for the rest of their lives**.**  Today’s reading describes the beginning of the heavenly reign of Christ with Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. It is on this Feast of the Ascension that we celebrate Jesus entering fully into the life and glory of God. It is now up to the disciples to assume the responsibility of spreading the Good News everywhere, with the promise that the Holy Spirit would empower them.

In the third reading, we reflect on how Sr. Mary McGlone and Father Antony Kadavil provide additional meaning to the Ascension. Though the Gospel readings focus on the responsibility of the disciples to spread the word, they remind us that we, too, as baptized Christians, have the same responsibility. Just as the angels implied that the disciples should stop looking at the sky and get to work, we, too, need to heed our call to take action.

**(Judy)** Now George Urban will read from the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. Anne Lo Piano will then offer questions for you to consider in silence. Feel free to stay with whatever question calls you.

 **READING 1 Acts 1:1-11 (George Urban)**

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God.

While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is', he had said, 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptized with water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

Now, having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?'

 He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end.’ As he said this he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky as he went, when suddenly two men in white were standing beside them, and they said, 'Why are you Galileans standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven.'

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Anne Lo Piano)**

The disciples had been through a lot with Jesus. How would you feel if you were with them watching Jesus being “taken up”?
 (pause)

Since Easter, Jesus had been with his disciples in a totally different way. Imagine sitting with Jesus as he told you about the Kingdom; what would you like to ask?

**SILENT REFLECTION**  (Judy will ring bell.)

Kate Monagan will now read from the Gospel of Mark.

**Reading 2 Kate Monagan Mark 16:15-20**

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Anne Lo Piano**)

When did you first become aware of the power of the Spirit? What did you do with that power? How has it evolved in you? (pause)

Jesus said that those who believe will possess great power. What role do your faith and belief play in how you face challenges?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (Judy will ring bell.)

**READING 3 - Some Reflections on the Meaning of the Ascension (Judy)**

The Ascension was the Grand Finale of Jesus’ words and work done for us and for our salvation. While it represented the completed work of Jesus, it marked the beginning of the work of the disciples as well as of all humans. Although Matthew, Mark and Acts record Jesus’ departing words differently, they are all in agreement that Jesus gave the disciples a mission of bearing witness by preaching and living the Good News. They were to tell and re-tell the story of Jesus’ life, suffering, death and resurrection. Jesus assured them of the Divine assistance of the Holy Spirit in the carrying out this mission. He instructed them to baptize believers.

By his Ascension, Christ has not deserted us. He has made it possible for the Holy Spirit to enter all times and places. In this way, it is possible for each of us to be transformed by the power of the Spirit into agents or instruments of Christ. We become enlivened, and our actions become animated in a new way by the Spirit of the God we love and serve. We become other Christs in the world.

Mary McGlone tells us “today, we are called to remember who we are. We are the baptized. We have received the Spirit. Yet, our temptation is to keep looking to heaven instead of trusting Christ’s judgment and taking the mission into our hands. Most of all, as a Theophilus community, we have been entrusted with Jesus’ mission for our time and place. Paul tells us that we can live a life worthy of our call. As Luke shows us, the Ascension is just the beginning. The angels would tell us what they told the group on the mountain: Stop looking up. It is now your turn…the only one you will have…to carry on.”

*[Slight pause]*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Anne Lo Piano)**

As baptized Christians how do you live out and proclaim the mission in **our** time and place as priest, prophets, kings and queens? (pause)

What does “being another Christ” mean to you?

How do you make room for the Spirit to guide you?

**SILENT REFLECTION** (Judy will ring bell.)

**(Judy)** Mary Ott will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING TIME (Mary Ott)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Long-ish pause]*

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence of more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  *[Pause.]*

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

(Mary) Now Marie McCarthy will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Marie McCarthy)**

God loves us and all creation. And so, with confidence we offer our prayers. Let’s pause to notice the prayers that rise in us now. *(Pause)* Our response will be: “Spirit of God, lead us and guide us today ”

Loving God, give us the grace to be open to your guidance on how we can…both individually and together… help build your Kingdom. For this we pray…Spirit of God, lead us and guide us today.

Loving God, may we hear the cry of the poor in our world today and with open hearts work for justice and peace. For this we pray. Spirit of God, lead us and guide us today.

Loving God, help us continue with courage to ground our work in a spirituality of the earth, non-violence, and the works of mercy. For this we pray. Spirit of God, lead us and guide us today.

Loving God, bless the work of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious as they respond to the increasing needs at the southern border with the presence of unaccompanied children arriving in our country. For this we pray. Spirit of God, lead us and guide us today.

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers)

Loving God, you fill all things with a fullness and hope that we can never comprehend. We ask you to reveal to us how we might become your instruments to lead others to you. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our suffering world, and help us discern how we might serve you by serving others. Knowing, good God, you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Pat Gabig)**

When Jesus ascended into heaven after completing his work on earth, he charged the disciples and each of us to proclaim his Word and to work to build the Kingdom of God. Let us reflect on a gift you have been given to build up the body of Christ. What action can you take this week, using that gift? *[Long-ish pause.]*

Generous God, Creative Spirit, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

 Now, Sister Grace Hartzog will lead us in the celebration of Communion.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Grace Hartzog)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in and among us. *[Pause.]*

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. *[Pause.]*

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in our world. *[Pause.]*

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Geroge Fulk)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Benediction) Alicia Urban**

Christ has no body, but yours; no hands, but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ

must look out on the world.

Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless all the world.

Broken, we have gathered;

Nourished, we now reach out.

Let us all go forth to love and serve the Lord. Amen

**(Alicia)** Now Reggie Ott will lead us in our closing song Sing a New Church.

As we sing, let us truly pray these words as we ask to become a new church.

**CLOSING SONG (Reggie Ott)**

“Sing a New Church” (sung to “Nettleton,” the melody for “Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing”) by Delores Dufner, OSB

Summoned by the God who made us
rich in our diversity
Gathered in the name of Jesus,
richer still in unity.

Refrain: Let us bring the gifts that differ
and, in splendid, varied ways,
sing a new Church into being,
one in faith and love and praise.

Radiant risen from the water,
robed in holiness and light,
male and female in God’s image,
male and female, God’s delight.

Refrain

Trust the goodness of creation;
trust the Spirit strong within.
Dare to dream the vision promised,
sprung from seed of what has been.

Refrain

Bring the hopes of every nation;
bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice;
let it sound through time and space.

Refrain

Draw together at one table,
all the human family;
shape a circle ever wider
and a people ever free

**RESOURCES**

Scripture and Reflection, excerpted and adapted from commentaries by Sr. Mary M. McGlone, “May 16, 2021, Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord”, National Catholic Reporter. <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/may-2-2021-fifth-sunday-easter>

And from Fr. Antony Kadavil, “Reflections for the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord,” <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2019-05/sunday-reflections-2-june-2019.html>.

Prayer of St. Teresa of Avila, adapted

Music

Opening Song. “Open Our Eyes” by Jesse Manabusan

Closing Song. “Sing a New Church” by Delores Dufner, OSB