

# SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD



## Empower Us

Almighty God,  
you empowered the apostles  
to bring others to faith  
through the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
Help us continue their mission  
in our families, schools, neighborhoods,  
workplaces, and parish.  
Gift us with the courage to witness  
our faith.

Inspire us to show the world our belief  
with our words, actions, and gestures.  
Use us as instruments of your grace  
through Christ our risen Lord. Amen.

Sunday, May 21, 2023  
**You Will Be My Witnesses**



*Today's readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9 (6); Ephesians 1:17–23; Matthew 28:16–20.* Our Scripture readings for almost every day of the Easter season have taken us progressively through the Acts of the Apostles. In this book, Luke pens with broad strokes the Church's development from the resurrection of Jesus to the apostle Paul's first incarceration.

Today we flip back to the very beginning of Acts. In the opening scene, Luke sets the stage for the foundation of the Christian community, the Church. In just a few short lines of Scripture, we hear Jesus' final words to his disciples and witness his ascension to the Father. Jesus promises the disciples,

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you,” and proclaims, “You will be my witnesses . . . to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Thus launches the subsequent twenty-eight chapters in which we hear the dramatic details about the experiences of the disciples, the powerful role of the Holy Spirit in the formation of the Christian community, and the spread of the Word of God.

It is often said that the most remarkable miracle of all those attributed to Jesus is the wildfire-like spread of the Gospel and the supersonic growth of the number of new Christians baptized. The Acts of the Apostles relates this miraculous emergence of the Church against all odds.



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, May 22 Eternally Bound

Jesus prepares his disciples for times when they will be scattered and feel alone. He assures them again that though they may be separated, they will never be abandoned. Their bonds, permanently forged in the Holy Spirit, will bring them peace in the midst of challenges. So it is for us today. We are bound together with an invisible thread in the community of faith. *Today's readings: Acts 19:1–8; Psalm 68:2–3ab, 4–5acd, 6–7ab; John 16:29–33.*

### Tuesday, May 23 Remain Close

Jesus affirms God's desire to be close to us in his heartfelt prayer on behalf of his disciples the night before he died. From today through Thursday, we hear this prayer in its entirety in the Gospel readings. Jesus ardently prays that we remember his teachings, stay close to one another, and remain close to God the Father. Sometimes we struggle to believe that God wants this loving relationship with us. Read John 17 in one sitting with this in mind. It is a powerful antidote to doubt. *Today's readings: Acts 20:17–27; Psalm 68:10–11, 20–21; John 17:1–11a.*

### Wednesday, May 24 Farewell

Take note of the parallel scenes between today's reading from Acts and the Gospel reading from John 17. Paul speaks to the community at Ephesus as he departs on his journey to death. Jesus speaks his prayer-filled goodbyes to his disciples on the eve of his arrest. Both Paul and Jesus insist that their strength in resisting the Evil One is rooted in the Holy Spirit. So it is with us to this day. The Holy Spirit serves as our armor and source of unity for the life of the world. *Today's readings: Acts 20:28–38; Psalm 68:29–30, 33–35a, 35bc–36ab; John 17:11b–19.*

### Thursday, May 25 Show Me the Path of Life

At the heart of today's readings, we pray Psalm 16:11, "You will show me the path of life." This prayer reflects St. Paul's experience throughout his ministry. At every turn he receives the Lord's guidance to show him where to go, what to say, and how to invite new believers to faith. This verse is also at the heart of Jesus' ardent prayer to the Father on behalf of his beloved disciples. Make it the heart of your daily prayer as well. *Today's readings: Acts 22:30; 23:6–11; Psalm 16:1–2a and 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11; John 17:20–26.*

### Friday, May 26 Feed My Lambs

The last resurrection appearance in John's Gospel offers a perfect opportunity for the prayer practice called *Ignatian contemplation*. In your imagination, place yourself on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias with the disciples in their final conversation with Jesus. Notice the details: the sunrise, waves lapping on the shore, salty scent of the sea and caught fish, smoke of the charcoal fire, the disciples crowding close to hear Jesus speak. Jesus has powerful words for us to hear today: I love you. Feed my lambs. Tend my sheep. Follow me. *Today's readings: Acts 25:13b–21; Psalm 103:1–2, 11–12, 19–20ab; John 21:15–19.*

### Saturday, May 27 Stay Focused

John's Gospel ends with Jesus' command to Peter to focus on following him. When Peter looks sideways to ask about a fellow disciple, Jesus replies, "What concern is it of yours?" (John 21:22). God's concern is not rooted in comparing disciple to disciple. It is part of the human condition to get distracted by what others are doing and to measure ourselves against our perceptions of others. Jesus' final words strongly counteract that temptation—stay focused! *Today's readings: Acts 28:16–20, 30–31; Psalm 11:4, 5 and 7; John 21:20–25.*

