

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD / SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Throughout this Easter season, we have reflected on how the risen Christ meets us in fear, walks with us in confusion, leads us as our Good Shepherd, reveals Himself as the way forward, and places His Spirit within us. This week, the Easter journey turns outward. In many dioceses, the Church celebrates the Ascension of the Lord on this Sunday, while others observe it on Thursday. In either case, we are invited into the same mystery: Christ ascends to the Father, not to leave us behind, but to send us forward.

This is an important truth for those of us in recovery. Healing is never meant to end with us. The freedom we receive is not something to hide or hoard. It is meant to be shared. Just as the disciples were formed by walking with Jesus, we too are transformed by journeying with Him—and then called to help others find the same hope we have received.

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gives His disciples a clear mission (Matthew 28:18–20): “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Notice that Jesus gives both a commission and a promise. He sends them out, but He does not send them alone.

This mirrors a central truth in recovery. None of us were healed in isolation. Someone shared honestly in a meeting. Someone reached out when we were struggling. Someone welcomed us, sponsored us, challenged us, or sat with us in our pain. At some point, what was freely given to us became part of our own healing. Then, often before we feel fully ready, we begin recognizing that what we have received is meant to be passed on.

This is the heart of Step Twelve: having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our

affairs. Carrying the message does not always mean dramatic gestures. Often, it looks like faithful presence—showing up to meetings, making coffee, leading a reflection, taking a newcomer’s call, offering sponsorship, or simply speaking honestly about where God has met us in our weakness.

In *The Spirituality of Imperfection*, Ernest Kurtz and Katherine Ketcham write, “In relationships of mutuality we give by getting and get by giving” (p. 83). This is deeply true in recovery. We discover that service is not an obligation placed upon us, but a gift that keeps us spiritually alive. We keep what we have by giving it away.

The first readings throughout Easter have shown us the transformation of the apostles. They were ordinary people who were fearful, confused, and imperfect, yet became bold witnesses through the power of the Holy Spirit. Peter, who once denied Jesus, became a courageous leader. The disciples were not chosen because they had everything together. They were chosen because they were willing to be transformed and willing to go where Christ sent them.

The same is true for us. We do not need to wait until we feel spiritually polished or emotionally perfect before being useful to God and others. Our wounds, honestly shared, become places where grace can reach another person. Our story becomes part of someone else’s hope.

As Easter draws near its close and Pentecost approaches, we are reminded that recovery is not only about freedom from addiction, compulsion, or unhealthy attachment. It is about becoming men and women who live differently—people shaped by grace, strengthened by fellowship, and sent forth with purpose.

Christ has ascended, but He has not abandoned us. He remains with us always—in the Eucharist, in prayer, in fellowship, and through the Spirit alive within us. What we have received is meant to be shared. As we continue in recovery, we are invited not only to follow Christ, but to help others discover the freedom that He offers.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who helped carry hope to you in your early recovery, and how did that shape your journey?

- In what ways are you being invited to carry a message of hope, healing, or encouragement to others today?

- How have service, fellowship, or accompaniment strengthened your own recovery over time?

MASS READINGS

FIRST READING Acts 1:12–14

RESP. PS. Psalm 27:1, 4, 7–8

SECOND READING 1 Peter 4:13–16

GOSPEL John 17:1–11a