

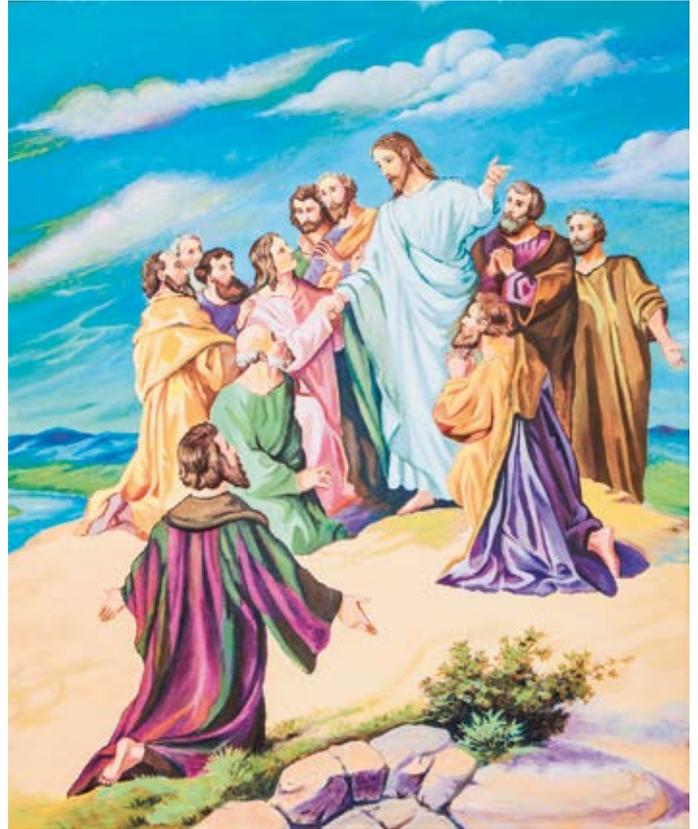
## 5th Sunday of Easter

**First Reading: Acts 14:21-27,**  
*'They gave an account to the Church of all that God had done with them.'*

**Psalm: Psalm 144(145):8-13a,**  
*'I will bless your name forever,  
O God my King.'*

**Second Reading: Apocalypse 21:1-5,**  
*'A vision of the heavenly Jerusalem,  
the bride of the lamb.'*

**Gospel: John 13:31-35,**  
*'In the Son of Man,  
God has been glorified.'*



### Background

Today's Gospel again comes from the Gospel of John. Like last week, today we hear words spoken by Jesus before his death and Resurrection. Jesus is teaching at the Last Supper.

John's Gospel does not include an institution of the Eucharist narrative; instead, Jesus washes his disciples' feet. Immediately after, Jesus predicts his betrayal by Judas. Today's Gospel follows that prediction. It can be read as a continuing explanation of Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet. It begins with the announcement that this is the moment when the Son of Man will be glorified. This theme continues throughout John's Passion. Jesus will be glorified in his death on the cross and in his Resurrection, and the disciples will glorify Jesus in the love they show.

John's Gospel does not present a sentimental view of love. This is a type of love that is shown in service and sacrifice. It is difficult to choose to love when faced with hatred and anger. Jesus tells the disciples that all will know that they are his disciples because of the love they show for one another. This description of the early Christian community will be repeated in the Acts of the Apostles: "See how they love one another." Christian love is the hallmark of Christianity. We see it lived in the witness of the martyrs. We see it in the example of the lives of the saints. We see it in the holy women and men who live and love daily, making small and large sacrifices for others.

## 6th Sunday of Easter

**First Reading: Acts 15:1-2,22-29,**

*'It has been decided by the Spirit and by ourselves not to burden you with any burden beyond these essentials.'*

**Psalm: Psalm 66(67):2-3,5-6,8,**

*'Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.'*

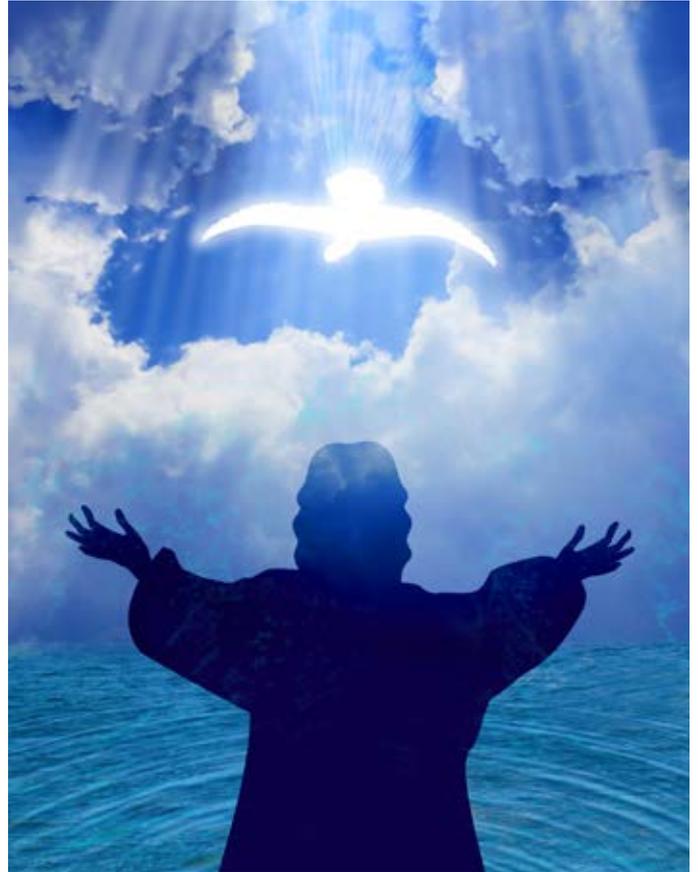
**Second Reading:**

**Apocalypse 21:10-14,22-23,**

*'He showed me the holy city coming down out of heaven.'*

**Gospel: John 14:23-29**

*A peace the world cannot give is my gift to you.'*



### Background

This portion of John's Gospel comes near the end of the first of four chapters that make up Jesus' long farewell discourse at the Last Supper. This section of chapter 14 actually sums up the themes of the opening of the discourse: the Christian's life is not shaped by Jesus' absence but by God's abiding presence; God's presence overcomes anxiety about God's absence; and the present holds in it the seeds of a fresh future shaped by love, not fear.

These verses also contain a glimpse of some of the other themes of the farewell discourse: Jesus' relationship with the Father and the disciples' relationship to Jesus connect the disciples to the Father as well. Jesus promises to send an Advocate or intercessor who will remind the disciples of everything that Jesus taught them and bring them peace.

Jesus is preparing his disciples in advance for his absence so that they will continue to believe in him and not feel all alone after his return to the Father. After the initial excitement of his Easter appearances, Jesus will remain with his followers in a very different way throughout the centuries.

As our celebration of the Easter season is coming to an end, the liturgy reminds us that Jesus remains with us through the Holy Spirit, who teaches us everything we need to know, reminds us of all that Jesus taught, and brings us peace.

## The Ascension

**First Reading: Acts 1:1-11,**  
*'Jesus was lifted up while they looked on.'*

**Psalm: Psalm 46(47):2-3,6-9,**  
*'God goes up with shouts of joy;  
the Lord goes up with trumpet blast.'*

**Second Reading: Ephesians 1:17-23,**  
*God made him sit at his right hand  
in heaven.'*

**Gospel: Luke 24:46-53,**  
*'He withdrew from them and was carried  
up to heaven.'*



### Background

Today is our liturgical celebration of the Ascension of the Lord, when Jesus was taken to heaven on the 40th day after Easter. In Cycle C, our Gospel is taken from the conclusion of the Gospel of Luke.

There are similarities in the reports of Jesus' Ascension found in the Synoptic Gospels—Mark, Matthew, and Luke. In each account, Jesus assigns his disciples the task of proclaiming the Gospel to the entire world. There are also notable distinctions. In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, the disciples are sent by Jesus to baptise as well as to preach. In Luke's Gospel, however, this commission to baptise is absent. Instead, Jesus directs the disciples to return to Jerusalem to await the fulfilment of his promise to send them the Holy Spirit. Curiously, only Mark and Luke actually report Jesus' Ascension into heaven. Matthew's Gospel concludes with Jesus' promise to remain with his disciples forever. Only the Gospel of Mark notes that Jesus ascended to sit at the right hand of God. In noting this, Mark teaches that Jesus' Ascension affirms the glory Jesus received from God after his death and Resurrection.

Those who believe in Jesus will be empowered to do what Jesus himself has done. Already in Mark's Gospel, during his ministry, Jesus sent his disciples out to preach, to heal, and to drive out unclean spirits. Now, they are sent again to do these things and more. From his place with God in heaven, Jesus helped his disciples, and he continues to help us as we try to live as his followers.

## 7th Sunday of Easter

**First Reading: Acts 7:55-60,**  
*'The stoning of Stephen.'*

**Psalm: Psalm 96(97):1-2b,6-7,9,**  
*'The Lord is King, most high above  
all the earth.'*

**Second Reading:**  
**Apocalypse 22:12-14,16-17,20,**  
*'Come, Lord Jesus.'*

**Gospel: John 17:20-26,**  
*'Father, may they be completely one.'*



### Background

On the seventh Sunday of Easter, we always read from the 17th chapter of John's Gospel. This chapter of John's Gospel comes at the conclusion of Jesus' Farewell Discourse delivered to the disciples at the Last Supper. The whole of this chapter is a prayer of Jesus, commending himself to the Father and expressing his care and concern for his disciples. At the end of this prayer, Jesus and his disciples depart for the garden, and Jesus is arrested.

Several important themes appear in this prayer of Jesus. First, Jesus' prayer reaffirms the complete union between Jesus and the Father. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus has been presented as the one who pre-existed with the Father and as the one sent by the Father to do his work on earth. In today's reading, we hear Jesus ask that the unity he experiences with the Father be extended to all who believe in him. He prays that we be one with each other, with him, and with the Father. We are reminded that Christ is the source of Christian unity. Through Christ, we are united with one another and with God our Father.

Belief is a major theme in the Gospel of John. It begins in the prologue and continues in the response to Jesus' signs. Belief is the reason Jesus performs signs (2:11, 4:53, 6:69, 9:38) and the reason signs have been recorded in the Gospel (20:30-31). Here Jesus prays not only for those who believe in him but for all who will come to believe in him. And he prays that the love of the Father in him may also be in all who believe so that Jesus might be in them as well.