

Parish of Malin (Clonca) Sunday 24th May 2020
The Ascension of The Lord (Year A Week 3)



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Malin Parish: Resources, news and prayers: **Website:** www.malinparish.ie. **Facebook:** Malin Parish

Details on the times of online **Masses and Prayers** for the Covid 19 Crisis : <https://www.catholicbishops.ie>
Mass Leaflets for each Sunday are available in the churches and parish shops along with the weekly Bulletin.

Sincere Thanks to those who have sent in their collection envelopes, cheques and donations for the Parish during the past week. Please make cheques payable to “Malin Parochial “.

The 54th World Day of Social Communications will be celebrated this Sunday 24 May – the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord. Pope Francis has chosen to reflect on the theme of storytelling in his message this year.

On Sunday morning and throughout the day, resources and video clips from around the diocese will be published on the Diocese website and its social media channels on this storytelling theme.

On Sunday, you can follow them online at: <https://www.derrydiocese.org/>
<https://www.facebook.com/derrydiocese> <https://twitter.com/diocesefoderry>

A day of Prayer and Penance - Friday, 29 May 2020

Bishop McKeown is inviting people to join him on Friday 29th May from St Eugene's Cathedral, Derry, where he will lead his second 24 hour 'virtual pilgrimage', to fast and pray, asking God:

- to free us from this pandemic and to support those who are fighting it;
- to comfort those who have been afflicted with this pandemic; and
- to ask God for the wisdom to know how to live now and in the aftermath of the pandemic.

This time of prayer and penance at home will take its shape from core elements of the 3-day Lough Derg pilgrimage. The day will start with 6:00am Mass, Seven Stations through the 24 hour period and conclude with 6:00am Mass on Saturday 30th May. You can follow and participate in the pilgrimage online at www.derrydiocese.org. Full details of Mass, Station times and prayers are available at: <https://www.derrydiocese.org/news/day-of-prayer>

“Why do you stand looking up to heaven?” – A Sermon for the Feast of the Ascension

As they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven?’
(Acts 1:10-11)

We live in a world in which up is better than down. Singers want to be at the top of the charts, athletes want to be on top of their game, and students want to be at the top of the class. Everyone would rather have an up day than a down day. When the stock market rises we celebrate, but despair when it crashes down. No one wants to be at the bottom of someone’s list. We work to climb, not to descend the career ladder. We hear and read about mountain climbers but not much is said or written about valley descenders.

The reality is that we want to live ascended lives. We want to break free from the things that hold us down and rise above it all. There’s nothing wrong with that. In fact, it is right. Something within us knows that we are more than earthbound creatures. The problem is that we have distorted what ascension and an ascended life mean. We forget, or perhaps deny, that Christ’s ascension places humanity next to God, and instead we settle for attempted self-ascension.

We can easily end up with a wrong understanding of God. In this distorted view, God, heaven, and holiness are up there somewhere while we are stuck down here. So we spend our time jumping up and down like little children thinking if we jump hard enough, high enough, and fast enough we can touch the moon. This gets lived out in so many ways. It almost always involves comparison, competition, and judgment of some kind. We compare ourselves and our lives with other people and their lives. We compete with each other believing that for us to ascend the other has to descend or at least not jump as high as us. We are forever judging ourselves and one another. We fill our lives with busyness hoping to climb to new heights. A life of self-ascension keeps us always searching for the next high.

Our attempts at self-ascension fragment our world and our lives. They separate the creature from the creator. They destroy relationships and intimacy. Ultimately, they become the gravity that deny us the ascended life we are seeking, a life that, in reality, is already ours.

Jesus' ascension reshapes our disfigured understanding of an ascended life. His ascension is the corrective and the antidote to the fragmentation and separation of self-ascension. His is the only authentic and life-giving ascension. Through him we too can live ascended lives.

Jesus' ascension is not about his absence but about his presence. It is not about his leaving but about "the fullness of him who fills all in all." It is not about a location but about a relationship. Presence, fullness, and relationship must surely be what lie behind the question of the men in white, "Why do you stand looking up to heaven?" It is as if they are saying to us, "Don't misunderstand and disfigure this moment. Don't deny yourselves the gift that is being given you."

The ascension of Jesus completes the resurrection. The resurrection is victory over death. The ascension, however, lifts all of humanity up to heaven. Jesus' ascension places human flesh, your flesh and my flesh, at the right hand of God the Father. We now share God's glory.

The ascension is more about letting go than it is reaching and grasping. The question for us is not, "How do we ascend?" That has already been accomplished. The question is: "What pulls us down?"

What do we need to let go of? Fear, anger, or resentment often weigh us down. The need to be right or be in control is a heavy burden. For some self-righteousness, jealousy, or pride is their gravity. Many of us will be caught in the chains of perfectionism and the need to prove we are enough. For others it may be indifference or apathy. Far too many lives are tethered down by addiction. Gravity takes many forms and the question for each of us is: what is it that pulls me down and that denies me Jesus' ascension?

The gravity that keeps us down is not creation or the circumstances of our lives. Gravity is not around us but within us. So as we begin to look at our lives and identify the places of gravity, we do not despair. The very things that hold us down also point the way to ascension. Our participation in Jesus' ascension begins not by looking up but by looking within.

The ascension is about presence not absence. Jesus has not left us. Rather Christ has filled us. Former Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple said, "The ascension of Christ is his liberation from all restrictions of time and space. It does not represent his removal from earth, but his constant presence everywhere on earth." Christ now fills and sanctifies all time and space. The grace of the ascension is that "Christ is all in all!" (Col. 3:11).

Jesus disappears in his ascension beyond the clouds, not into some geographical location, but into the heart of all creation where he dwells in his glorified humanity. The ascension reveals that in Christ's humanity, all humanity has been enthroned next to God. It is our "eternalization," and from that moment on our homeland is in heaven. Through the ascension Christ is still present but in a different way—an interiorized way. He is no longer physically in front of his disciples but rather within them.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things:
Mercifully give us faith to see that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.