

## Ascension Day

The Feast of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, is also called Ascension Day, Ascension Thursday, or sometimes Holy Thursday. It commemorates the Christian belief of the bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven. It is one of the ecumenical feasts of Christian churches, ranking with the feasts of the Passion, of Easter, and Pentecost, following the account of Acts 1:3, that the risen Jesus appeared for 40 days prior to his Ascension. So, Ascension Day is traditionally celebrated on a Thursday, the fortieth day of Easter.

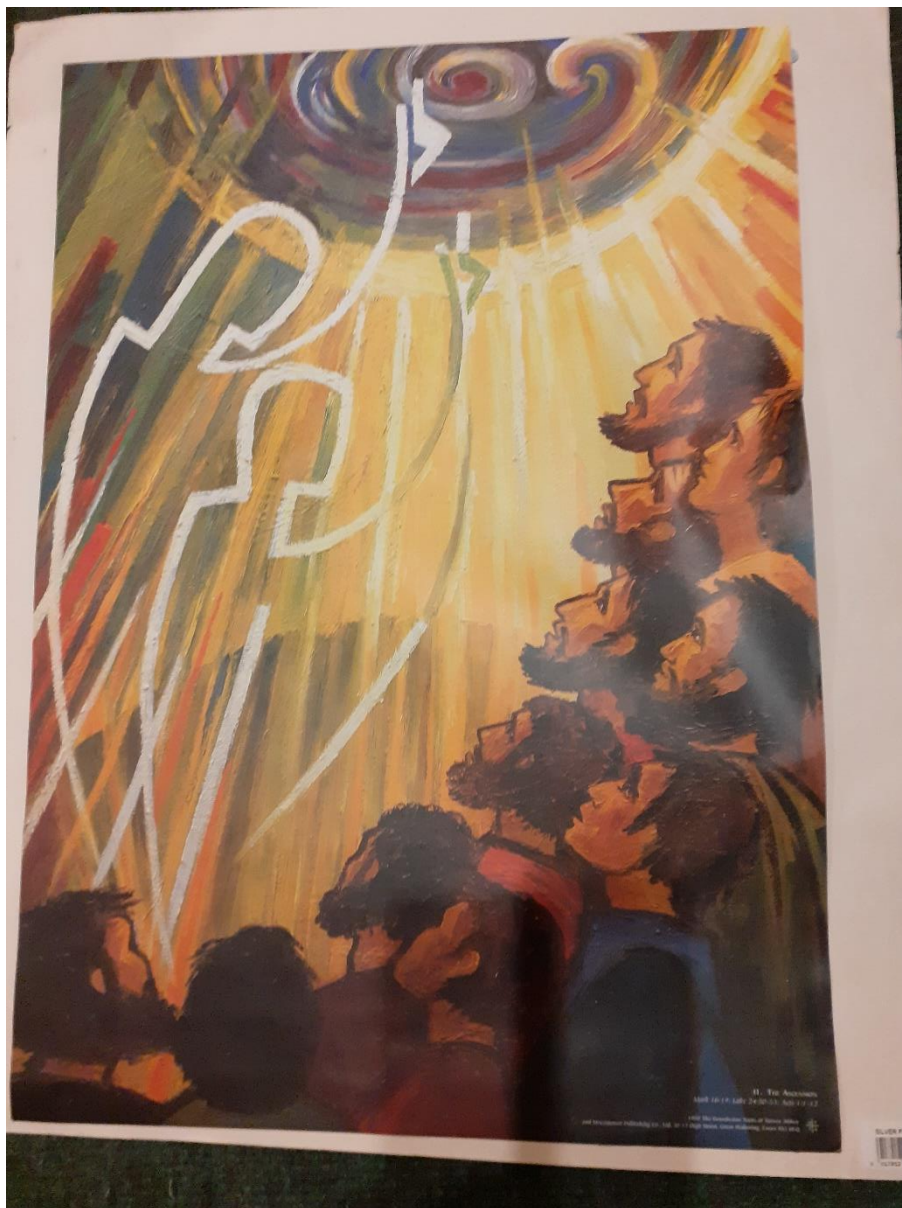
Below are two posters, which form part of a collection comprising the whole Passion of Christ (from: 1998 The Benedictine Nuns of Turvey Abbey). The first is of Jesus risen from the dead. Jesus Christ is pictured with the scars from the nails of crucifixion on his wrists, as he stands surrounded by the glory of the God.



The second below, shows eleven disciples looking upwards. Luke writes in Acts chapter 1:

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus said to them "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of earth." After Jesus had said this, he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee", they said "why do you stand here looking in the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven".



There are several thoughts which we can reflect on here:

- The disciples still didn't really understand
- It was God who was the one who was ordaining what was happening
- The disciples were going to receive power to do all that God was releasing them to do
- Their Lord Jesus was taken away, and now they would receive the Holy Spirit and grow
- The angels averted the disciples' gaze, so that, reassured, their ministry would begin

The disciples had been prepared by Jesus for what was ahead of them. At this point they didn't fully realise with their human understanding. Faith requires believing without seeing. Jesus wouldn't be before their eyes anymore, his presence would be in their hearts and in their spirits.

They would need to trust that God had the bigger picture. He did know and they would come to know, what was needful for their true vocation as disciples .... Witnesses to the love of God for everyone, through the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ.

Little by little maybe, but they would remember all Jesus had taught them both before he was crucified and after he rose from the dead, with the scars on his hands to prove it.

Sometimes there aren't sufficient words to explain the wonder, although the Apostle Paul tried when writing to the people of Colossae:

Jesus is first to be born from the dead.  
all perfection is found in him  
and all things were reconciled through him and for him;  
everything in heaven and everything on earth,  
when he made peace by his death on the cross.

The Church is his body,  
he is its head.  
He takes his place in heaven  
at the right hand of God,  
where we worship with all of creation.

Our response comes from deep calling to deep:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

**Amen.**

**Let us pray:**

Risen Christ, you have raised our human nature to the throne of heaven: help us to seek and serve you, that we may join you at the Father's side, where you reign with the Spirit in glory, now and for ever.....