

The Ascension of the Lord Cycle A Readings & Background on the Gospel Reading

Today's Readings

First Reading - *Acts of the Apostles 1:1-11*

Jesus is taken up to heaven in the presence of the apostles.

Responsorial Psalm - *Psalms 47:2-3, 6-9*

Sing praise to God as he mounts his throne.

Second Reading - Ephesians 1:17-23

God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand.

Gospel Reading - *Matthew 28:16-20*

Jesus charges his disciples to make disciples of all nations and promises to be with them forever.

Today's Gospel is taken **from the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew**. Matthew's Gospel quickly moves from the disciples' discovery of Jesus' empty tomb, to Jesus' appearance to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to the commission that Jesus gives his disciples in today's Gospel.

The Final Commission, as this Gospel is sometimes called, is given on the mountain top. **Throughout Scripture, the most important events happen on the mountaintop**, and Matthew has used this motif throughout his Gospel. Earlier in Matthew's Gospel, Peter, James, and John had seen Jesus transfigured on the mountaintop ([Matthew 17:1-8](#)). Also in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus taught the crowds from the mountaintop in what we now call the Sermon on the Mount.

Here we are told that the **eleven disciples go the mountaintop** in Galilee, as Jesus had instructed through Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (cf. [Matthew 28:9-10](#)). They see Jesus, and both worship and doubt at the same time. **Jesus approaches them and commissions them to baptize and teach, "to make disciples of all nations."**

It is a task which Jesus had previously prepared his disciples for; **recall that Jesus had sent the twelve apostles to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal** (cf. [Matthew 10:1-15](#)).

However, earlier the Twelve were sent only to the House of Israel; in this Final Commission, the eleven are told **to go to "all nations."** **The mission of Jesus is now to be taken to all people; the task now is to baptize and to teach.**

Jesus commissions his **disciples to baptize in the name of the Trinity**, one of the clearest attestations found in Scripture for baptism in the name of the Trinity.

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Letters of Paul, **baptism is more frequently offered "in the name of Jesus."**

The ending of Matthew's Gospel can be understood as the beginning of the Church. Jesus commissions **his disciples to continue to teach in his name and to bring others into the community of disciples through baptism.**

The Gospel ends, as it had begun, with **the promise that Jesus will continue to be Emmanuel, "God with us"** (cf. [Matthew 1:23](#)), **for all eternity.**

The Ascension of the Lord, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 1, 2, and 3)

Gospel Reading Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus charges his disciples to make disciples of all nations and promises to be with them forever.

Young children learn the Good News from the people of faith in their lives. Even though young children are often on the receiving end of Jesus' commission to his disciples, they can appreciate the importance of sharing the Good News with others. Jesus commissions all of us to go and make disciples, and he promises to be with us until the end of the world.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Play this memory game with the children.
Sit in a circle and start the game by saying: *I'm going on a camping trip; I'd better bring a tent.*
The child to your right should say next: *That's a good idea. I'm going on a camping trip too. I'll bring a tent and a flashlight.*
The next person should continue in this manner, repeating the previous items and adding a new item. When all of the children have had a turn, say: *We started out with just one thing and look at how many we have now!*
2. Say: *In the Gospel this week, Jesus told his friends to go and tell the whole world about him. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.*
3. Read Matthew 28:16-20 to the children.
4. *The eleven disciples who heard Jesus say those things couldn't possibly go to every place in the whole world, but they did tell the people they met how Jesus had changed their lives. Then the people that they told went on to tell the story to others and added what Jesus was doing for them. The story just kept on going—and it's still going today as I am telling you these things about Jesus. Jesus promises to be with us until the end of the world. By telling the stories of his life, we remember how much he means to us.*
5. Conclude by praying together that we will continue the mission that Jesus gave to his disciples by telling other people about what Jesus means in our lives. **Pray together the Lord's Prayer.**

The Ascension of the Lord, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 4, 5, and 6)

Gospel Reading Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus charges his disciples to make disciples of all nations and promises to be with them forever.

Young people, received into the Church at Baptism, grow and mature in their understanding of the responsibilities of Baptism. When Jesus appeared to his disciples, he commissioned them to make disciples of all people and baptize them. That task is one in which all members of the Church are called to participate. We continue to be reassured by Jesus' promise to be with us, the Church, until the end of the world.

Materials Needed

- None

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. ***How do people become members of the Church?*** (through Baptism)
What do you think makes people want to become members of their Church? (Accept all reasonable answers.)
2. ***In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. The words in this reading are the last words that Jesus says to his disciples in Matthew's Gospel. Let's listen carefully to this Gospel.***
3. Invite a volunteer to read aloud today's Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20.
4. Ask: ***What does Jesus tell his disciples to do?*** (to make disciples, to teach, to baptize)
What do you think made people want to be baptized? (the disciples' teaching, the witness of the disciples' lives, the power of the disciples' actions)
5. ***Today we are not that different from those who heard the teachings of the first disciples. We too become members of the Church through Baptism. The teachings of others and the example of their lives and their actions make us want to be members of the Church. Of course the saints and other holy people are witnesses to Christian discipleship but so are members of our family and our local Church. Everyone who helps us to understand what it means to be a Christian is doing what Jesus told his first disciples to do: go forth and make disciples.***
6. Say: ***All of us who are baptized are sent by Jesus to make disciples of all nations. What did Jesus promise at the end of today's Gospel?*** (that Jesus would be with us always, until the end of the age) Say: ***Jesus is still with the Church.***
7. Conclude in prayer together that we will always be faithful to the commission that Jesus gave us to go and make disciples.

Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

The Ascension of the Lord, Cycle A

Making the Connection (Grades 7, 8, and 9)

Gospel Reading Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus charges his disciples to make disciples of all nations and promises to be with them forever.

Young people need clear directions for any assignment they are given. In the Gospel for the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus gives very clear directions—a mission statement of sorts—to his disciples and to us.

Materials Needed

- An example of a mission statement (from your parish, the company you work for, or an organization you belong to)

Preparation for Sunday Scripture Readings

1. Bring in an example of a mission statement and explain to the young people that the purpose of a mission statement is to sum up the reason an organization exists.
2. Tell them that a mission statement includes three things:
3. A **purpose statement** that clearly states what the organization seeks to accomplish (for example, to eliminate homelessness)
4. A **business statement** that outlines the business (i.e., activities or programs) the organization chooses in order to pursue its purpose (for example, providing job training to homeless individuals)
5. A **values statement** that identifies the beliefs that guide the work of the organization (for example, a commitment to provide the tools for those in need to help themselves)
6. Explain that in the Gospel for the Ascension of our Lord, Jesus states what our mission is to be. Tell the young people to listen closely to see if they can identify it.
7. Invite a volunteer to read today's Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20.
8. Ask: ***What does Jesus tell his disciples to do? (to make disciples, to teach, to baptize)***
9. Explain that the mission statement Jesus gave fits the three criteria mentioned above:

*The purpose statement is to make disciples of all nations.
The business statement is teaching and baptizing.
The values statement is in the name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.*
10. Conclude by praying together that we will always be faithful to our mission to go forth and make disciples.
11. Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father
IN HEAVEN
may your name
be kept holy
May your Kingdom
come soon
May your will be done
on Earth
as it is in
heaven
Give us today
the food we need
and forgive us
our sins, as we
have forgiven
those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield
TO TEMPTATION
but rescue us
from the evil one.



The Ascension of the Lord, Cycle A Family Connection

Gospel Reading Matthew 28:16-20

Jesus charges his disciples to make disciples of all nations and promises to be with them forever.

Just as Jesus sent his disciples to make disciples, **our family, the domestic Church**, is called to bear witness to the life of discipleship.

That act of witnessing can take many forms. **First and foremost our family should call people to discipleship by the example of our love for one another.** That example is only the beginning; **our love must extend beyond the family, reaching out to others and to the world.**

Together with your family, identify one or more ways in which your family lives the life of Christian discipleship. *Thank God for the blessing of the opportunity to be able to show God's love.*

Then read together today's Gospel, Matthew 28:16-20.

Discuss what Jesus sends his disciples to do.

Work together to identify one or more ways in which your family would like to do a better job bearing witness to the life of discipleship.

Choose one of those ways and work together to make it happen.

Pray as a family for the grace to be witnesses to the world of the life of discipleship.

Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father
IN HEAVEN
may your name
be kept holy
May your Kingdom
come soon
May your will be done
on Earth
as it is in
heaven
Give us today
the food we need
and forgive us
our sins, as we
have forgiven
those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield
TO TEMPTATION
but rescue us
from the evil one.
