



Ascension of the Lord

After His Resurrection, the Lord appeared to His disciples numerous times over the course of the 40 days before His Ascension. The Myrrhbearing Women were the first to witness the evidence of His Resurrection at the Tomb. Then Mary Magdalene saw Him in the Garden and He sent her to tell the Apostles. They came and saw the empty tomb for themselves. Then He revealed Himself to them in the upper room and came again 8 days later for Thomas' sake. He appeared to Luke and Cleopas on the road to Emmaus and on several other occasions. Then on the 40th day after His Resurrection, His Most Holy Mother, the Apostles and the disciples were present on the Mount of Olives, when He ascended into heaven.

Although He left the earthly world in the flesh, Christ did not abandon it in His Divinity: "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Our Holy Fathers tell us that if we will remain faithful to His commandments, repent of our sins and struggle to acquire the virtues with God's help, we too shall rise from the dead and, if we are judged worthy, will rise with our

regenerated, spiritual body to heaven, where, as the Blessed Augustine says, “all the people of God shall be made equal to the angels.”

As Vladimir Lossky wrote: “The feast of the Ascension is the feast of salvation consummated. The whole process of salvation: birth, passion, death and resurrection are completed in the Ascension.”

“When Thou hadst fulfilled for us Thy dispensation, and united the things in earth with the things in Heaven, Thou, O Christ our God, didst ascend into glory, in no wise being parted from those that love Thee, but Thou didst remain with them inseparably and proclaim to them: I am with you, no one is against you.” (Kontakion of the Ascension)

This month, we will celebrate the feast of the Ascension of our Lord. Let us take this opportunity to reflect on and participate in the spiritual significance of this feast for us. As Orthodox Christians, we are called to be witnesses of our Lord Jesus Christ and His heavenly kingdom. As He said, “My Kingdom is not of this world.” So let us turn our minds and hearts heavenward as we celebrate this feast. In doing so, we are preparing ourselves for the time when we too will leave behind this earthly world in flesh and hope to join Christ in His heavenly kingdom.

Glory be to God!