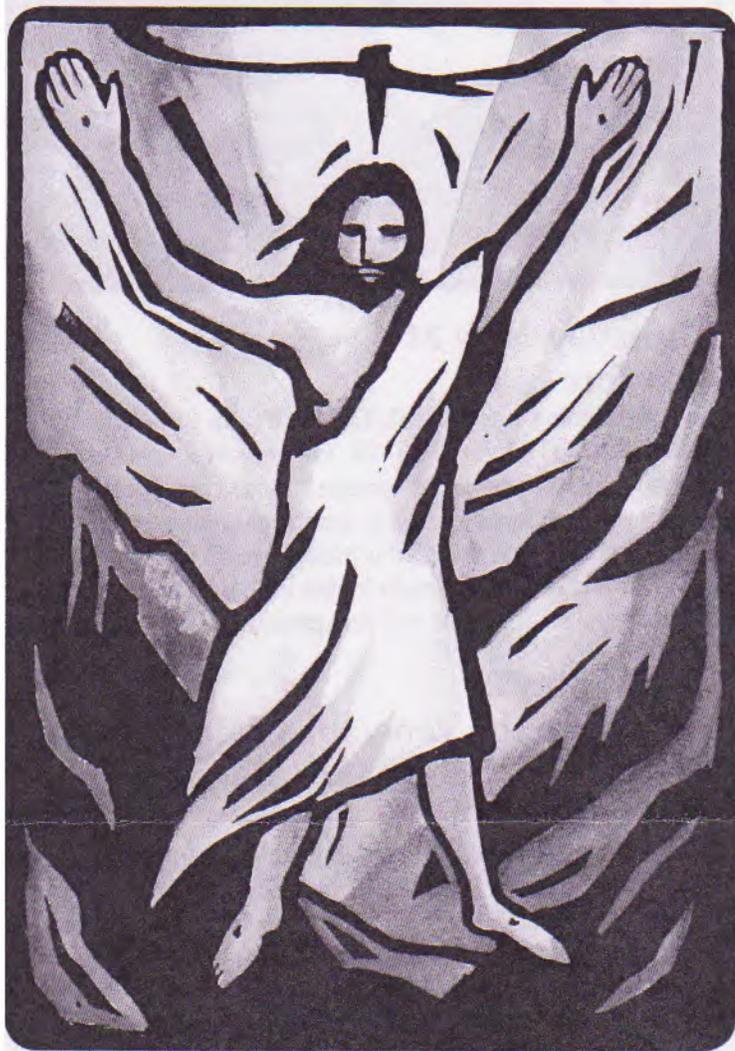


# Ascension of the Lord



## Work with Us

God our Father,  
you sent us a Savior,  
and through him, taught us  
to do your will in the world.  
Open us to your promptings.  
Work with us,  
as you did with the first disciples  
to proclaim the good news  
in word and deed.  
Overcome our weaknesses,  
cut through our distractions,  
and use us to fulfill  
some part of your design.  
We ask this through our Lord Jesus  
Christ,  
your Son, who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

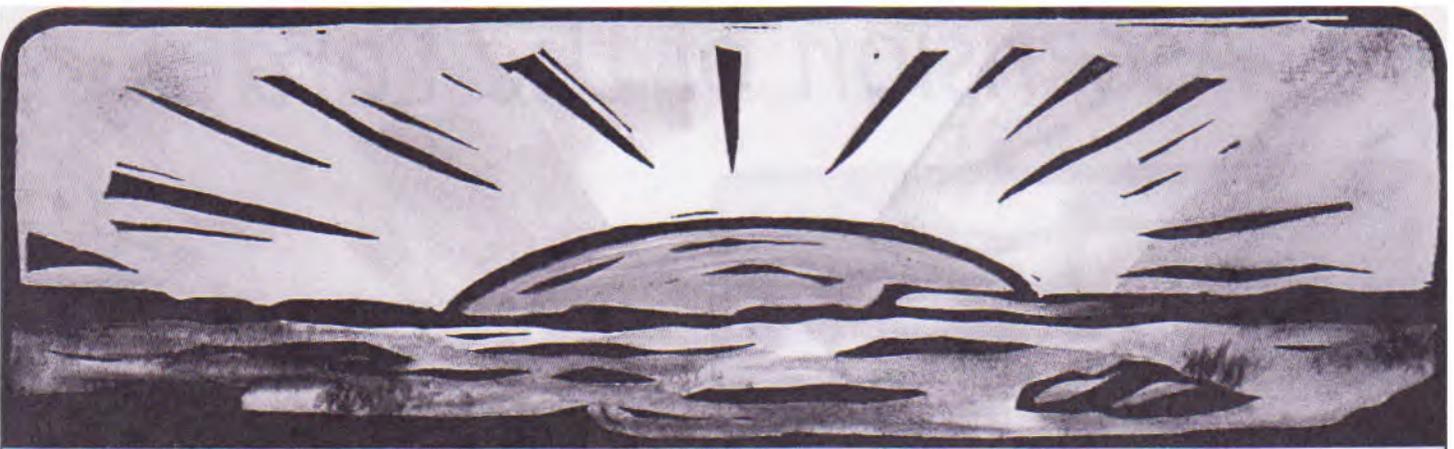
## Sunday, May 20, 2012 Spreading the Good News

Today's Readings: Acts 1:1–11; Psalm 47:2–3, 6–7, 8–9 (6); Ephesians 1:17–23 or 4:1–13; Mark 16:15–20. At first, the disciples seem unlikely prospects to carry a radically new message throughout the world. At different times in the Gospel, they appear fearful, ambitious, or slow to understand. But in today's Gospel, Jesus seems to have no doubt they can do the job. He doesn't question their abilities; he simply gives them marching orders. And, like children whose parents express this clear confidence in them, they rise to the challenge. Because of Jesus, these ordinary humans rose to do extraordinary deeds.

Some have taken verses 17–18 literally, with unhelpful results. We need to look more deeply and broadly for the true meaning of this passage. For example, we can see expressions of Jesus' words in hospitals where people recover

from serious injury and the sick are healed. In schools, students learn foreign languages. In retirement centers, staff and visitors bring the residents music, activity, and entertainment. On local and national committees, people try creative solutions for difficult problems. Efforts to preserve the planet's resources thrive around the globe. In universities, students design ways to purify drinking water in Africa or utilize solar power for the computers of Micronesia. In multiple ways, Jesus continues to "work with" and animate his followers—unlikely as they may seem.

Perhaps it is a question of our awareness. Are we conscious that Christ's wisdom and goodness are working in us despite our weaknesses? Are we willing to let it work through us?



## This Week at Home

**Monday, May 21**

### Saint Christopher Magallanes and Companions

Today's Readings: Acts 19:1–8; Psalm 68:2–3ab, 4–5acd, 6–7ab (33a); John 16:29–33. Saint Christopher and the priests and laymen whose optional memorial we may celebrate today, lived in different Mexican states when the practice of Christianity was illegal. They all belonged to the Cristero movement and must have understood firsthand Jesus' words in today's Gospel: "In the world you face persecution" (16:33).

**Tuesday, May 22**

### Saint Rita of Cascia

Today's Readings: Acts 20:17–27; Psalm 68: 10–11, 20–21 (33a); John 17:1–11a. Jesus prayed for his followers, "Now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world" (17:11). Christ's disciples must bring his compassion to the world. Saint Rita (1381–1457), whose optional memorial we may celebrate today, acted as the heart and hands of Jesus even in severe circumstances. Her abusive husband of 18 years was murdered; her two sons died. At first denied entrance to the convent because she was a widow, eventually she was accepted. She is the patron saint of impossible causes.

**Wednesday, May 23**

### Prayer for Our Protection

Today's Readings: Acts 20:28–38; Psalm 68:29–30, 33–35a, 35bc–36ab (33a); John 17:11b–19. When Jesus prayed for unity in today's Gospel (17:11), he didn't mean uniformity, for God delights in the endless variety of Creation. He must have foreseen his disciples' distress after his death. He had protected them while he was alive, but could no longer be physically present. Knowing their weaknesses, and those of all who'd follow, he asked the Father's protection for them. It's absurd to think of Jesus' prayer *not* being answered. When we are ill, disappointed, or enraged, can we remember his solicitude on our behalf?

**Thursday, May 24**

### No More Fear

Today's Readings: Acts 22:30; 23:6–11; Psalm 16:1–2a and 5, 7–8, 9–10, 11 (1); John 17:20–26. Throughout John's Gospel account, the word *meno*, or "remain," is used consistently. In today's passage, Jesus asks us to rest in continuing unity with God. He reassures us that God is merciful and kind, not angry and punitive. If we can remain in that love, which Jesus gave his life to reveal to us, we will find peace.

**Friday, May 25**

### Saint Bede the Venerable; Saint Gregory VII; Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi

Today's Readings: Acts 25:13b–21; Psalm 103:1–2, 11–12, 19–20ab (19a); John 21:15–19. Saint Bede (673–735) never traveled beyond the area of his monastery in Jarrow, but had great influence, especially through his teaching and writing. His book, *History of the English Church and People*, chronicles the role of the faith in the development of his country. Just before his death, he finished translating John's Gospel account into English. In the eleventh century, Pope Gregory battled simony (selling the sacred) and kings trying to control the appointment of bishops. Gregory was a bold reformer, first as papal counselor, and then as Pope. Known for spiritual ecstasies, Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi (1566–1607) endured five years of severe depression, and wrote five books about her experiences.

**Saturday, May 26**

### Memorial, Saint Philip Neri

Today's Readings: Acts 28:16–20, 30–31; Psalm 11:4, 5, and 7 (Alleluia); John 21:20–25. Saint Philip (1515–1595) was known for his sense of humor and energy. Even during difficult times, his joy attracted friends who informally started a community called the Oratory in Rome. They boldly evangelized people who had grown cynical about Christianity.



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*Keeping the Seasons*

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