

THE CHURCH YEAR FOR CHILDREN



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ASCENSION THURSDAY

JUST as our preparation for Easter lasted for forty days and nights, so also our celebration of the Resurrection of Jesus lasts forty days and nights.

These forty days recall how Jesus appeared to His disciples after His Resurrection. Throughout the Easter Season, we read the accounts of His appearances and how He encouraged and taught His disciples, preparing them for their mission. All of this time, priests wear white vestments when they celebrate the Mass, for white is a sign of joy. And every time that we gather to pray, we sing “Alleluia” over and over again, for it is a call to rejoice and to praise the Lord.

Then, at the end of the forty days, we celebrate Ascension Thursday. This feast recalls the day when Jesus took His disciples to a hill just outside of Jerusalem. He blessed them and told them that they must now preach His message throughout the whole world. He was then taken up from their sight into the clouds, for He now sits at the right hand of the Father.

The disciples stood around for a while, confused. But an angel appeared to them and told them to return to Jerusalem and to pray for the coming of the Spirit.

THE ASSUMPTION

ON August 15, we celebrate another of the feasts that recall Mary and her life of service to the Word of God.

When Jesus was dying on the Cross, He spoke to His beloved disciple and to Mary. To the disciple He said, “Son, behold your Mother.” To Mary He said, “Woman, behold your son.” From that day on, the beloved disciple took Mary into his home and cared for her.

Then, on the day of Pentecost, Mary was praying together with the disciples when the Holy Spirit descended upon them. For the rest of Mary’s life, she continued to give witness to the love that God had shown to her and to all of the followers of her Son.

When her life upon this earth was over, God gave her a special blessing. He did not let her body lie in a tomb, but rather raised her up into heaven body and soul.

We celebrate this event on the feast of the Assumption, on August 15. On that day, we speak of God’s great love for Mary and her great love for God. But we also speak of how God loves us, too, and how, like Mary, He will raise all of us up on the last day into heaven, body and soul, to share in His life forever.