

Church Traditions

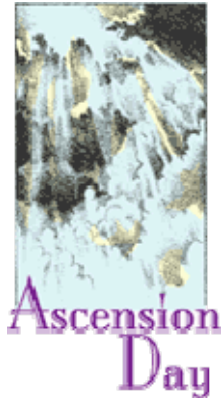
Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday

Ascension Day

Ascension Day celebrates Christ's ascending into heaven after rising from the dead. In Acts we are told how **"he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs"** and appeared to his disciples during 40 days speaking to them **"of the Kingdom of God."**

Tradition has it that this feast was first observed in the year AD 68. It is not mentioned in any liturgical calendars prior to the fourth century. It is referred to as an *"ancient and universal"* festival. St. Augustine claimed it originated with the apostles.

Mount Olivet near Jerusalem is believed to be the place where Christ's ascension took place. Legend arose that a stone bearing the footprints of Jesus can be seen on the exact spot where he ascended. Today, in some Western churches, the Paschal Candle, lighted on the eve of Easter as a symbol of the resurrected Christ, is extinguished on Ascension Day. This shows that the Light of the World is no longer on Earth.



**So when they met together, they asked him,
"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"**

He 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 the earth."***

**After he 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 into 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."***
(Acts 1:6-11)

Pentecost Sunday

The day of Pentecost is the church's festival of the Holy Spirit. As the third principal festival of the church year, the day on which we remember how the Holy Spirit came powerfully to a gathering of Jesus' followers in Jerusalem. But Pentecost is more than remembering a past event; it is also a day to celebrate the gift of faith to people throughout the world, the fulfillment of Christ's promise to be with us always, and the bestowal of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.



Two common Pentecost symbols represent the Holy Spirit. A descending dove is frequently used to symbolize the coming of the Spirit, since the Gospel of Luke reports that the Holy Spirit came to Jesus at his baptism in the form of a dove. (*Luke 3:22*). Tongues of fire are also used to symbolize the Holy Spirit, based on the account of Pentecost located in Acts 2:1-4. The liturgical color for the Day of Pentecost is bright red, which reminds us of the first of the Spirit.

**When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven
and filled the whole house where they were sitting.**

**They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire
that separated and came to rest on each of them.
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began
to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.
(Acts 2:1-4)**

Trinity Sunday

The Sunday after Pentecost is known as the festival of the Holy Trinity. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity often confuses not only laymen but also theologians. It is enough for Christian to know that the doctrine is an attempt on man's part to explain the infinite mystery and the Divine Being. The nature of the Trinity, therefore, must always be set forth in a symbolic way. The ancient Christian doxology ("*prayer of praise*") - "**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit**" - is used in most Christian churches.

On Trinity Sunday it is interesting to note the designs on our free standing Altar. The three interlocking circles denote the three persons of the Trinity... and how they are separate but yet one.

The most remarkable example of this kind is found in the Trinity Church of Stras Paura, Austria, built in 1722. It has three aisles, three towers, three bells, three doors, three windows on each side, three altars and three rows of pews.

This is the one who came by water and blood?? Jesus Christ. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

**For there are three that testify:
The Spirit, the water and the blood;
and the three are in agreement.
We accept man's testimony,
but God's testimony is greater
because it is the testimony of God,
which he has given about his Son.
(1 John 5:6-9)**

