

Jesus said, "I am with you for only a short time, and then I am going to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." The Jews said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find him? Will he go where our people live scattered among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did he mean when he said, 'You will look for me, but you will not find me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?" On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified. (John 7:33-39 NIV)

Dear friends of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ + This week is situated between the Holiday commemorating the Ascension of our Lord to the right hand of the Father and the fulfilment of his promise to send his Holy Spirit to his Christian Church there in Jerusalem on Pentecost.

1. **Our Lord returns to the Father:** I am going to the one, who sent me!
2. **He grants a standing invitation:** Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink!
3. **He promises rivers of living water:** By this he meant the coming Holy Spirit!

The Ascension holiday commemorates the ascending Lord IX, who is alive and well, who was raised from the dead and was taken up before the eyes of the disciples **to return to his Father** after his mission was successfully accomplished to be seated at the right hand of God the Father together with whom he lives, rules and reigns over heaven and earth, wielding all authority over things visible and invisible, and from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds **like a great, mighty river** flowing forth in divine abundance, vigorous power, exuberant vitality and blissful holiness and awesome splendor – showering the Christian Church with faith, love and hope amongst other delightful gifts, miracles and wonders of our gracious, loving and dearest God – Father, Son and Holy Ghost – one God now and evermore. Him we praise and glorify together with the Church – militant and glorified.

Now the Son was faithful to the Father. He fulfilled his mission to the very last detail. It all happened as it was most delightfully and salvifically ordained by the three divine persons in the one Godhead long before time even started and we can even dream of postulate a beginning. **He returns victorious into heaven.** Returns to where he comes from. And although the bible doesn't tell us much of his triumphant return, we can imagine the roar that must have arisen in the heavenly realms, when the son returned the champion, the exultant victor and glorious prize holder. He overcame sin, death and devil. Plundered hell and brought back God's lost children from the ends of the world. The saviour of the world,

the king of kings and Lord of Lords. Now there is joy in heaven, loud jubilation and merry celebration over one sinner, who repents¹ Can you imagine the party, when our Lord returned and brought back home lost humanity, not just the few tribes of Israel and the house of Jacob, but rather the richest bounty from the ends of the world, from all languages, nations and spheres he brought back home God's people even as the old evil foe is tied up, displayed and showcased for what he is – the tied-up loser and vanquished has-been. And to his Father he can say: "Here is, what you entrusted to me. Mission accomplished. The salvation of the world is completed. The justification of sinners fulfilled. Rich and abundant fruit – way beyond 100fold. It's number surpasses the stars in the sky. No way of counting them. And it's all his and under his control and mighty feet, yes all tongues confess him as Lord and all knees bow before him. Yet we here below, we don't see that far. Our eyes are clouded still. We see as if through hazy mist or a blurred window. We, just hear his farewell: "I am going to the one who sent me. You will look for me, but you will not find me; and where I am, you cannot come." He's not going to hide on this earth, but rather he goes out of this world and to the Father. That's another dimension. Metaphysics – God's world and right hand! Still, it's just a matter of time **and he'll return here too** – visibly and in all his glory – to judge the living and the dead. Everybody will have to face him. No running away, no hiding, no cover-ups. Then we will see him as he is, the only begotten Son of the Father – full of grace, glory and divine abundance, power and love.

Although we can't see him, nor go to him in his glory, he comes to us with his means of grace, his holy gifts of mercy, his abundant love and caring goodness. **He calls & invites us most friendly and graciously:** Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink! That is an open invitation. Not exclusive: "Right of admission reserved!" No – he's standing there with wide open arms and bids you to him: "Come to me all you who are burdened and heavily laden. I will give you rest!" "Come, taste and see, how friendly your God is!" "Come it is all prepared!" "The feast is ready. The party is about to start. Come, come, come!" This is not just empty election talk, but rather **the standing invitation** of the one, who has demonstrated again and again, that he has the authority and power and goodwill to feed multitudes in the desert, grant flowing streams of water in the barren desert, yes, even change water into wine. He fills the empty nets. He heals our diseases, and forgives all our iniquities, washes our sinful stains away in baptismal waters and cleanses, purifies and sanctifies us with his most holy and treasured blood. Grants life out of death, fills the hands of those emptyhanded with riches and grants hope and lasting faith and homes to those poor, outcast and as so miserable. He quenches our deep thirst, feeds the hungry and grants lasting peace, quiet rest and blessed harmony to those, who were on the run, migrants, homeless and refugees. Not just with this or that gift, but he himself enters in: **The Lord and giver of life** – and brings along all he has, can and does – for us and our salvation.

¹ Lk.15:7.10 cf. 25.32

He lifts our eyes and hopes beyond our present need and suffering. He grants hope to those, who were previously hopeless, resigned and giving up on all and everything. He gives credibility to the dream of a new life, better times, flourishing abundance and lasting salvation and blessed heavenly bliss and joy. Not just a trickle of help here, a morsel of goodwill there falling from the tables of the rich – no – he promises flowing streams of life – flowing like a strong, mighty river - giving waters of life, waterways of hope, abundant floods of peace and flourishing life: *He leads me to quiet waters. He refreshes my soul ... He sets out a table for me in the sight of my enemies, he anoints my head with oil and my cup overflows with good things. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* (Psa 23:2-3.5+6 NIV) All this and much more, he does through the **Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of Life** - because the HS grants this here and now. He doesn't remove us from the valley of death. He doesn't take us out of this world – at least not yet – but he is with us, he comforts, strengthens and keeps us most wonderfully and miraculously in the severest calamities and fires, depressions and sinkholes so that we don't have to fear any ill. Rather his rod and staff comfort me – right there in the valley of death and in the darkest grave. His HS grants us living hope, confirms our trust in his unfailing goodness and mercy in worst suffering and terrible hardship. He keeps us connected with Christ our Lord. He enlightens, strengthens, keeps us in the true faith – through the forgiveness of sins, keeps our trust alive and prevents us from giving up by imprinting on us the loving and caring image of our Lord IX and our heavenly Father and only God. He does this caring ministry and life saving mission through his most gracious service, the office of ministry, his Churches mission and outreach program serving the people with W/Sacrament creating saving faith, where and when it pleases him in those, who hear his holy Word and partake in his most precious sacraments: Baptism & the Lord's supper.

Like the Father **sent him, he sends his called servants to the ends of the world** – to go about the mission of preaching the Gospel, forgiving sins and proclaiming the grace of him, who sent them into this delightful and life-saving mission of the holy Christian Church to bind & to loose sinners with heavenly authority that it is as firm as if our God himself was dealing with us. Central to this mission is the **standing invitation**: Come and see, what the Lord has done, what he is doing and what he is still going to do. Finally this is **going to be like a flowing river, broad, strong and unstoppable** – bringing life and salvation to the parched lands of barren souls, waiting for the Lord more than watchmen in the morning. He however, will surely hear our cries for help and hear our prayers as we pray: Send us your Holy Spirit. He sends him, who is called **the Lord and giver of Life**.

Amen. The Peace of our living and reigning Lord IX be with you always +

Hymns 497 + 763