



Living the Faith – Step 2

Returned to the Father

Aim

To know what the Ascension is and the impact it has on Christian life today.

Resources needed

Leaders

- *Come and See notes*
- *PPT laptop and projector or TV*
- *Prayer focus items*
- *News Articles, highlighter pens*
- *Bible or Scripture Text*
- *Post it notes*

For Young People

- *Journals*

Prayer Focus

White Cloth – *The Ascension*

Image of the Risen Lord - *Angel of the North, or alternative*

Signpost – *showing four side arrows, two each for repentance and forgiveness, one upwards pointing to the Father*

Candle – *White or yellow, Jesus the Light of the World*

Liturgical Link

The Ascension is one of the great feasts of the Church. Traditionally celebrated on the Thursday, 6 weeks after Easter, now celebrated on the following Sunday.

Overview

- Obedience & Trust
- The Command and the Mission
- The Power of Forgiveness
- Gone but not Forgotten
- The Holy Spirit
- Prayerful Reflection

Preparation by Catechists

- *Familiarity with content and resources*
- *Be ready to share stories of hope overcoming fear or finding peace*
- *Pray for the young people and leaders*

Scripture Passages

- Luke 24:44-49 Jesus Command and Promise
- Luke 24:50-53 The Ascension

Tenets of Faith (Faith Formation)

- Responsibilities of the baptised
- The call to repentance
- The promise of support
- The Ascension of Jesus
- The Power of the Holy Spirit

Gathering:

- **Welcome and Overview:**
 - Thank the young people for coming back.
 - Give a brief reminder of the key points from the last gathering.
 - Offer an overview and aim for this second step
 - **Introductory activities:**
 - **Musical Statues:** clear a space in which the young people can move around freely.
 - Ask the group to dance or freely move their bodies when the music starts
 - When the music stops, they too stop and hold their position, remaining still.
 - Have a couple of practices then eliminate whoever is the last to be still, or anyone who moves before the music restarts.
 - **Pass the Person:**
 - Gather the group, standing, in a closed circle, tight together.
 - Ask for a volunteer, willing to trust the group to move into the centre of the circle. (a catechist fills their place in the circle).
 - Standing with feet together and arms crossed the volunteer gently leans back towards the adult, who gently catches the weight, then passes the person on to the person on their right, all repeat and the person is passed gently around the circle.
 - Invite another couple of people to volunteer and repeat the process.
 - **Reflection and response as a group:**
 - how comfortable were group members with what was being asked?
 - what were the issues – if any?
 - how safe did the people being passed around the circle feel? What helped or hindered?
- FF**
- Throughout his ministry Jesus spent time preparing the disciples to be observant, obedient and in all situations to be aware of the needs of others.
 - Jesus had great power, but only used it for good. Power and authority are privileges to be used wisely, for the greater good, not self-interest or ego.
 - A valuable attitude to cultivate in life is to never ask another person to do something you are not willing to do yourself.

Scripture and Reflection

- **The Command and the Mission – Luke 24:44-49**

Introduction: The disciples hadn't always fully understood or heeded Jesus words, now, having been re-energised by their meetings with the Risen Lord, their faith and trust would again be seriously tested.

Luke 24:44-49 set the scene, then invite the young people to listen attentively as the passage is read, imagining themselves amongst the disciples, with these words being spoken to them.

Activity: - *Jesus preached forgiveness of sin – how do we recognise sin in our world?*

- Working in pairs, each supplied with a sheet of paper containing a number of News Headlines.
- Using a highlighter the young people identify any headline which points to a sinful act having taken place and consider the questions below, jotting down answers ready to share with others:

Ponder:

- Why do you think the headline relates to something sinful?
- Relate the headline to a real-life situation and suggest how you might act to influence the situation for good – what might you say or do?
- In life we can find it easier to blame another person for our failings or wrongful acts: how able am I to accept blame or offer forgiveness?
- Why is forgiveness so important?

- FF**
- A sin is a wrongful act that is knowingly committed. Sin separates us from God.
 - In baptism, freed from sin, we are called to be one with Christ and his mission.
 - The call to repent was central in Jesus mission, and that of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus.
 - When we try to make a bad situation better, we help to prevent sin and are living as Jesus taught us; we are living out the Gospel and the call of our baptism.
 - Forgiveness enables relationships to be restored and trust rebuilt.
 - Recognising how difficult it can be to both forgive others and at times overcome our own guilt too, the Church offers the Sacrament of reconciliation.
 - This powerful Sacrament is one that is often neglected, but when used well brings great healing and hope into people's lives.
 - Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the sacrament draws us closer to God.

Prayerful Response

- **Prayer focus:** *refer to items and their significance here and as appropriate later*

The power of forgiveness: – give each person three post-it notes. Invite everyone to consider the following questions, and in response to each to write a name or other response on each post-it notes then fold it in half (3-5 min)

- In your family who is the person with whom you seem to clash most? Try to work out what triggers the clash so you can work to overcome it.
- Amongst your friends, is there someone who has caused hurt that you have not been able to forgive? Ask God for the grace to do so.
- At school or amongst an interest group is there a relationship between people that needs healing? Ask God to soften their hearts so harmony can be restored.

Gather in a semi-circle in front of the prayer focus with the post-it notes.

- FF** - The image of the *Angel of the North* represents the spirit of God constantly watching over the people of Tyneside, in the North East of England. (see *L the F Step 2 _ Angel of the North*)

- God is always watching over us, as are our family members, those close by, those living further afield, and those who have died. These are the angels who help to guide us and keep us safe.

As we listen to this song, individuals are invited to come forward in turn (each waiting till the next person has sat down again) to place the folded paper into the dish at the foot of the sign post, and quietly say: Lord, bring them forgiveness and healing.

Song – *Lay your hand gently upon us:* <https://youtu.be/7SdeWyVBQCg> or other

We offer all these thoughts and prayers to God as we pray together the Our Father.

Scripture and Reflection

Luke 24:50-53 - The Ascension

- Before reading the passage, or watching the video clip, set the scene and encourage the group members to imagine they are there, witnessing it.

The Bible Series <https://youtu.be/vtvKWVLRcng> 1min 19 or Son of God: <https://youtu.be/HaS-9AP96gE> (The Resurrection (3.45) and the Ascension (1min.15))

- Allow a few moments of reflection, encouraging the young people to make notes in their journals and be ready to share in response to the questions:

- How might you have felt?
- How did the disciples respond?

Rather than being in turmoil, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy, not seeming afraid at being left with a big task.

- Can you think of a time when you were really worried or afraid. Who or what helped you to cope?
- Describe how you felt afterwards.

- FF**
- Each of us need people to support us through difficult times.
 - Such people are called advocates; which is also another term for the Holy Spirit. Our advocates are the presence of the Holy Spirit for us.
 - We can also call on the help of the Holy Spirit directly through prayer and an open heart.

Going Deeper

- **Gone but not forgotten:** Before leaving the disciples Jesus promised he would be with them always – but how could he be? Through the Holy Spirit, the advocate, the power from on high that would be given to them, by the Father.
 - Ask the young people to recall symbols that are commonly used for the Holy Spirit
 - Chart up answers on a sheet, inviting individuals to explain what the symbols might mean.
 - Clarify as necessary and provide a link to the Pentecost, the Step 3 topic.

- FF** - **Dove** – in the story of Noah’s Ark a dove signaled the end of the flood (Gen8:8-12) It is now used across the world as a symbol of peace. When Jesus was baptised the Holy Spirit descended on him in the form of a dove. Lk 3:22 and other Gospels.
- During each of the post resurrection appearances Jesus greets the disciples by saying: ‘peace be with you.’– he invites them to live in the peace of the Holy Spirit.
 - **Flame or Tongue of Fire:** Fire is used as a symbol for God in many of the OT stories. The Pentecost story, Acts 2:3-4 speaks of a tongue of fire resting on the heads of the disciples.
 - **Wind:** In the creation story Gen 1:2, the breath or wind of God represents the Holy Spirit’s contribution. 1 Kings 19:20 also speaks of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the whispering wind.
 - **Light:** the Holy Spirit is an enlightener, a source of inspiration and a guide along the way. Lk1:35 refers to Mary being overshadowed with the power of the most high when the Holy Spirit came.
 - **Cloud:** the mysterious presence of God, which is referred to in many parts of the Old and New Testament.
- **Growing in Holiness**
 - We receive the Holy Spirit in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. The gift of the Holy Spirit helps us to be strong in our faith, grow closer to God and so be able to use more fully the gifts God has given us.
 - Just as Jesus worked to bring peace into the lives of others, let us, in the week ahead look for opportunities to be a peace-maker, so helping bring the presence of God into a difficult situation.
 - **Prayerful response:**
 - Invite the young people to think of a situation in Australia, or another part of the world, where peace is lacking, but seriously needed.
 - Choosing one of the images of the Holy Spirit as a focus ask the young people to create a prayer for this situation. Provide a couple of examples:

Example: 1. Dove: Lord, let the dove of peace rest on the shoulders of the leads in Syria so the needless fighting can stop.

2. Breath/wind: Lord, the Australian Members of Parliament are constantly bickering. Send the Holy Spirit to breathe on them and inspire them to work together for the good of our nation.

Closing Prayer

- Gather in a circle / semi-circle around the prayer focus.
- The leader picks up the candle and says: Together we offer our prayers asking God to hear them and help us on the path to holiness.
- Gently, each person in turn offers their prayer holding the candle.

Together all then pray:

Leader Lord Jesus, here are your disciples, in need of your strength and support.

All Send your Holy Spirit to help us deal with the questions for which there are no easy answers. Enable us to trust in you, and the goodness of humanity. By your grace may our lives bear witness to the Gospel message proclaimed by your son Jesus.

Leader Lord Jesus, glorious and resurrected,
you always will the best for us and dare us to smile with you, as we walk
behind you.
Give us your hopefulness, your determination and your peace.

All Amen

Closing Remarks and Next Step

- Invite response to the Step 2 gathering
- Living the Faith Step 3 – Pentecost
- Encourage personal and prayer support of one another and attendance at Mass.

DRAFT