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Collects for Ascensiontide:

GRANT**, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens; so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. **Amen.

O GOD**, the King of glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy kingdom in heaven; We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless; but send to us thine Holy Ghost to comfort us, and exalt us unto the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. **Amen.

Ascension Day falls on the fortieth day after Easter—the Thursday of the sixth week of Eastertide—and commemorates the day our Lord “was taken up,” as related in Mark 16, Luke 24, and Acts 1. The feast day ranks with Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost (Whitsunday) in most Christian churches. As early as the end of the Fourth Century, Ascension Day was celebrated “in all the world,” according to St. Augustine. Despite the note of separation, **Ascensiontide**—the 10 days from the Ascension to Pentecost—celebrates the final triumph of the risen Christ, a resounding conclusion to **Eastertide**.

Our Lord’s post-resurrection appearances no doubt had shown that he already belonged to the spiritual world, but his ascension placed him at the right hand of God as “our only mediator and advocate,” subsumed into the Godhead. “The dust of the earth is on the throne of the majesty on high,” wrote one Scottish scholar. Consistently, our Lord spoke of himself not as “Messiah” or the “Son of God” but as the “Son of Man” in all four Gospels: Matthew 31 times, Mark 14 times, Luke 26 times, and John 13 times—84 times in all!

Before the Ascension, the disciples had known Jesus—the Word of God incarnate—in the flesh—as a human being like themselves. Even his appearances after the Resurrection took human form. At Pentecost, Jesus manifested his presence through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Until Jesus’ glorification by ascension, the indwelling Holy Spirit was not given to the souls of men at Pentecost (John 7:39). Ever since, both individually and collectively, believers have experienced the presence of our ascended Lord inwardly, spiritually, and simultaneously—unrestricted by limitations of space and time.

Joseph Fort Newton, renowned clergyman and writer, beautifully sums up our Lord’s omnipresence in a sermon, “My Christ.” Born in Decatur, Texas, in 1876, Newton was ordained a Baptist minister in 1895, became pastor of City Temple in London during World War I, and served as an Episcopal priest and rector in Philadelphia from 1926 until his death in 1950. In 1929, Sir Knight Newton was Grand Prelate of the Grand Encampment.

Newton wrote, in summary: Each person has his own need, and that need, is the point of contact with Christ. Let me offer a suggestion: the Spirit that is behind history, in it and over it, and the Spirit that we call Christ, are one and the same; else why is He our eternal contemporary, in defiance of time, distance, and death? He is the central figure of history...the divine reality, so far as we can know it or need to know it. Everything else may fail, but he will not fail. Often enough the Church has failed, by folly or default. Of old, men fought against him and put him to death, but it was futile. In the crisis of individual souls, in the strange vicissitudes of history, over and over again, when it seemed that men had done with him, ‘then came Jesus, the doors being barred, and stood in the midst.’ He rolls away the great stones from all sepulchers and takes new forms and assumes new glories as ages go by—the same yesterday, today, and forever.

***The foregoing message was prepared at my request by
The Eminent Grand Prelate, Sir Knight J. Knox Duncan.
Sir Knight Dock F. Dixon Jr., R:E: Grand Commander***