

“Ascending in Heart and Mind” Poetry Celebration
The 7th Sunday of Easter: The Sunday after the Ascension
21 May 2023

Ascension Day
by Christina Rossetti

Read by Patti Cullen (8:00); Kristin Liu (9:30)

When Christ went up to Heaven the Apostles stayed
Gazing at Heaven with souls and wills on fire,
Their hearts on flight along the track He made,
Winged by desire.

Their silence spake: “Lord, why not follow Thee?
Home is not home without Thy Blessed Face.
Life is not life. Remember, Lord, and see,
Look back, embrace.

“Earth is one desert waste of banishment,
Life is one long-drawn anguish of decay.
Where Thou wert wont to go we also went:
Why not today?”

Nevertheless a cloud cut off their gaze:
They tarry to build up Jerusalem,
Watching for Him, while thro’ the appointed days
He watches them.

They do His Will, and doing it rejoice,
Patiently glad to spend and to be spent:
Still He speaks to them, still they hear His Voice
And are content.

For as a cloud received Him from their sight,
So with a cloud will He return ere long:
Therefore they stand on guard by day, by night,
Strenuous and strong.

They do, they dare, they beyond seven times seven
Forgive, they cry God’s mighty word aloud:
Yet sometimes haply lift tired eyes to Heaven—
“Is that His cloud?”

Looking Up

by Luci Shaw

Read by Marisa Esposito (8:00); Hope McGrath (9:30)

Those starlings,
that crowd of black wings
patterning the noon sky,
flow along a highway invisible,
unknown to us, we without
wings, stiff, anchored,
eyes on the rutted road beneath our feet.

How to look up. To risk
looking up, perhaps to lose
our footing in the enchantment of
cloud splendor, the heaven-
sent stabs of sunlight, the arrival
of rain on our dry fields,
our yearning hearts.

The Moments of High Resolve

by Howard Thurman

Read by Stephanie Crump (8:00); Wendy Ostreicher (9:30)

In the quietness of this place, surrounded by the all-pervading Presence of God,
my heart whispers: Keep fresh before me the moments of my High Resolve,
that in fair weather or foul,
in good times or in tempests,
in the days when the darkness and the foe are nameless or familiar,
I may not forget that to which my life is committed.

Keep fresh before me
The moments of my high resolve.

Reflections

Read by Patti Cullen (8:00); Gerda Leveille (9:30)

by Cyrus E. Albertson

In a puddle by the roadside
Left by warm, spring rain,
Its waters dark and muddy
With the brown earth stain,
I saw a glorious mountain
That stood up bold and high
Reflected in the water,
With a patch of cloud-decked sky.

Sometimes in folk around me
With burdens, hurts and fears:
Through joyful, happy hours
And often through their tears:
In some loving acts of kindness
As they show how much they care –
In the lives of folk around me
I find God reflected there.

A Sonnet for Ascension Day

Read by Brian Sahlin

by Malcolm Guite

We saw his light break through the cloud of glory
Whilst we were rooted still in time and place
As Earth became a part of Heaven's story
And Heaven opened to his human face.
We saw him go and yet we were not parted
He took us with him to the heart of things
The heart that broke for all the broken-hearted
Is whole and Heaven-centered now, and sings,
Sings in the strength that rises out of weakness,
Sings through the clouds that veil him from our sight,
Whilst we ourselves become his clouds of witness
And sing the waning darkness into light,
His light in us, and ours in him concealed,
Which all creation waits to see revealed .

Beginners

by Denise Levertov

Read by Marisa Esposito (8:00); Sunnie Scarpa (9:30)

From too much love of living
Hope and desire set free,
Even the weariest river
Winds somewhere to the sea—
But we have only begun
To love the earth.
We have only begun
To imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?
— so much is in bud.
How can desire fail?
— we have only begun
to imagine justice and mercy,
only begun to envision
how it might be
to live as siblings with beast and flower,
not as oppressors.
Surely our river
cannot already be hastening
into the sea of non-being?
Surely it cannot
drag, in the silt,
all that is innocent?
Not yet, not yet—
there is too much broken
that must be mended,
too much hurt we have done to each other
that cannot yet be forgiven.
We have only begun to know
the power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.
So much is unfolding that must
complete its gesture,
so much is in bud.

The Secret Ascension

by Angelus Silesius

Read by Dee Anne Dodd (8:00); Brad Schide (9:30)

When you yourself above yourself
lift up and let God prevail,
Then will in your spirit
the Ascension be held.



***BONUS POEM: Not read aloud but commended for your prayer and meditation.**

Ascension

by John Donne

Salute the last and everlasting day,
Joy at th' uprising of this Sun, and Son,
Ye whose true tears, or tribulation
Have purely wash'd, or burnt your drossy clay.
Behold, the Highest, parting hence away,
Lightens the dark clouds, which He treads upon;
Nor doth He by ascending show alone,
But first he, and He first enters the way.
O strong Ram, which hast batter'd heaven for me!
Mild lamb, which with Thy Blood hast mark'd the path!
Bright Torch, which shinest, that I the way may see!
O, with Thy own Blood quench Thy own just wrath;
And if Thy Holy Spirit my Muse did raise,
Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise.