

A NOTE TO PARENTS

In many of our churches, there is a large and ornate candle called the *Paschal candle*, which is first lit at Easter and then is kept burning throughout the Easter season, as a sign of Christ's risen life, present among us. Until recently, it was traditional in many churches to extinguish this candle during the liturgy on Ascension Day. Under this tradition, the Easter season lasted forty days. With this Thursday, Ascension Day, Jesus has ascended—has "gone away." Having risen from the dead and walked among us, he is now no longer with us; but now we are back to "normal," the normal we experienced before he ever came. We have our memories; we have his promises and assurances of new life for us. But he himself is gone, and we wait in emptiness for the Spirit to come at Pentecost, as a substitute for his tangible presence.

Recently, however, the Church has begun to recover a more ancient and profound sense of the meaning of Jesus' ascension, and to affirm that it is all of a piece with the Resurrection and the descent of the Spirit. Jesus has not "gone away," leaving us bereft until we receive a replacement for him through the gift of the Spirit. The Paschal candle still burns this Sunday, and we still greet each other by saying "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" Just as the Resurrection does not turn the clock back to the way things were before Jesus died, so the Ascension does not turn it back to the way things were before he was born. God's movement is always forward. Jesus' risen life, expressed briefly in a series of poignant appearances among us, has now moved home to its own sphere, spreads throughout the world and is characterized by images of *kingship* and *glory*. He has made himself present to us so that we may know and love him and be drawn to his light ... but the way we are to know him over the long haul is through his life actually living within us. We are to be like children, who, the psychologists tell us, "internalize" the figure of their parents so that the parents' values become part of their deepest self rather than being imposed from outside. The risen Christ is now our King ... and we too, like the unpromising youths in the fairy tales, are to grow up, achieve mastery over many trials, and inherit the Kingdom.

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THE SUNDAY PAPER, 19 Colony Road, New Haven, CT 06511, USA
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THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year A
7th SUNDAY
of EASTER

"Sing to God, sing praises to God who rides
upon the heavens, and rejoice in his Name!"

PSALM 68:4



A few weeks after he rose from the dead, Jesus led his friends to a mountaintop.



He said, "God will give you the HOLY SPIRIT, and you will spread the Good News all over the world."



Then, suddenly, Jesus was gone. But two angels were standing where Jesus had been.



They said, "You have seen Jesus leave you in glory. He will also come back in glory."



This week we had a day called ASCENSION DAY. ASCENSION means "going up." Jesus went up to God. Now he is not just in one place. Like God, he is everywhere, all the time. He is King over the whole world. His love is always with us, to make us strong and loving like him.

We learn more about Jesus by reading the Bible, praying, and going to church. Draw your church here.