

# Grace Notes *Friday, May 14, 2021* <sup>1</sup>

Dear friends:

Caught between the celebration of the Ascension of our Lord as celebrated in much of the world on the Thursday which marks the fortieth day after Easter, and our migration of this feast to the Sunday following, we have a couple of days to think about the impact of this event on the disciples then and the faithful of today. We can only imagine that Jesus' friends saw his many visits to them after the Resurrection as a bit of a reprieve, after they were sure that he had left them after his death on the cross. Now they have to watch him go from their midst and know that this is IT. There must have been mixed hope and fear as they waited to see how his promise to send an Advocate to be with them would be borne out. Unlike those men and women, we have the advantage of knowing what is going to happen ten days later (or a week later in our case) when the Holy Spirit comes into their midst on the day we now observe as Pentecost.

There is a lot of significance in these two Feasts: one forty days and the other fifty days after the Resurrection. Forty is reflected in the flood in Genesis, in the number of years the Israelites sought the Promised Land, in the forty days Jesus spent in the desert (remembered in our Lent) and in many other biblical accounts.



The fifty days between Easter and Pentecost parallel the fifty days between Passover and the Jewish Festival of Shavuot, May 16 -18 this year, an event that recognises both the ancient celebration of the barley harvest and Ruth's acceptance of the faith of Naomi, but also the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the Exodus

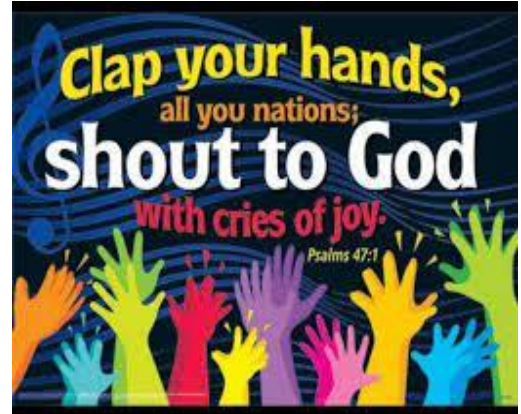
from Egypt. For the Jewish people, this signifies entering into a covenant with God which is often compared to the covenant of marriage. Shavuot is observed with an all-night scripture study session which generally includes the Book of Ruth.



<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C3%A8s\\_Riches\\_Heures\\_du\\_Duc\\_de\\_Berry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tr%C3%A8s_Riches_Heures_du_Duc_de_Berry)

*Our celebration of the Ascension contains one of the most joyful Psalms in the Psalter, Psalm 47:*

God has gone up with a shout,  
the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.  
Sing praises to God, sing praises;  
sing praises to our King, sing praises.  
For God is the king of all the earth;  
sing praises with a psalm.



*It is also one of the psalms which in both Jewish and Christian traditions celebrates the kingship of God. Some scripture scholars consider that it was written when King David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Zion. It alludes to Rosh Hashanah, the Day of Judgement in Judaism, and in Christianity is tied to Ascension as the day when Jesus, having completed his mission on earth, ascends to his throne in the heavenly Zion. Similarly, some of the hymnody written for Ascension is very regal or joyful; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMqK5MahM7U> however, there are some examples which are quite wistful, reflecting a sense of the sadness the disciples may have felt in seeing the Lord disappear from their sight. I am reminded of this older song:*

On Olivet a little band Around their risen Master stand:  
And after charge and blessing giv'n, He passeth from them into Heav'n.  
Wistful their eyes, but angels twain Cheer them with glorious words: "Again  
One day shall Jesus even so return, as ye have seen Him go."  
(Words: Samuel Stone, 1866 Music: Jeremiah Clark, 1707.)

*I think of the generations of people who have left home to come to the New World, saying farewell to family members who might never see them again and who would wait in hope for letters or messages to make their way back to reassure and comfort them.*



*We, too, have many messages and letters in the Holy Scriptures to keep the Lord alive in our midst; and better yet, we have the Holy Spirit who – as Jesus promised – is here with us always.*

*Wishing you a blessed week!*

*Gillian*