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The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Faith and Order

The Ascension (*Paschal Season*)

Liturgical Readings:

Rom. 10:1- end; 1 Pet. 3:15 – end; Acts 1:1-12

Psalm 47:5-6;

Luke 24:45—end

The Anaphora of Saint Dioscorus

Christ is risen from the dead,
(trampling down death by death)
with high power and authority;
binding Satan in chains and (upon those in the tombs bestowing life)
setting Adam free,
and from now on it will be joy and peace.

The Ascension

Beloved children of the Holy Covenant, today we stand in the sacred aura of the Mount of Olives to behold the mystery of **ዕርገት** —the Glorious Ascension of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. For forty days following His triumphant Resurrection, the Lord remained among His disciples, a period echoing the sacred fasts and holy encounters of old: Moses ascending Sinai to receive the Law (Exodus 24:18), Elijah strengthened by heavenly food for his journey to Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). In these forty days, Christ laid the foundations of the New Covenant Church, opening the minds of the Apostles to understand the Scriptures, and commanding that repentance and remission of sins be preached in His Name among all nations (Luke 24:45–47).

He stood as the Divine Conqueror, having despoiled principalities and powers; as it is written: **“When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men”** (Ephesians 4:8). We, who were once captives of the shadow of death, are now the spoils of His victory, liberated from the tyranny of sin and the rebellion of Satan. Before His Passion, the Son prayed to the Father, saying, **“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do”** (John 17:4). That work now receives its heavenly seal.

The Lord chose the Mount of Olives for His departure, a sanctuary where He had often sought solitude from the clamor of Jerusalem. From this vantage, gazing upon the city with eyes of infinite compassion, He hallowed the groves and valleys that had echoed His prayers and witnessed His agony in Gethsemane. Near Bethany, the home of Lazarus, the King of Glory prepared to mount His chariot of light. As He led His followers out, they knew not that this would be their final earthly encounter, yet He comforted them with the eternal promise: **“And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”** (Matthew 28:20).

As He lifted His wounded hands to bless them, a power beyond human comprehension drew Him upward. While they beheld Him, He was taken up, and a radiant cloud received Him out of their sight. This was no ordinary departure, but a transition into heavenly majesty. And as they stood transfixed, two men in white apparel spoke: **“Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:11).

Indeed, He ascended with a shout and the sound of the trumpet (Psalm 47:5), and He shall return in glory with His holy angels, to sit upon the throne of His majesty (Matthew 25:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). The Ascension is not merely a departure; it is our exaltation. As our Church proclaims, **“God ascended from the grave with a righteous ascension... the Son of God ascended to teach us the ascension of the righteous.”** By taking our human nature into the Holy of Holies, He became our Great High Priest. Having purged our sins, He **“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high”** (Hebrews 1:3; 8:1). This “sitting at the right hand” signifies that the human nature He assumed—once lowly and broken—is now enthroned in the highest glory.

St. Paul exhorts us in Colossians: **“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above... for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God”** (Colossians 3:1–4). Our citizenship is now in heaven. By His death, we died to sin; by His Resurrection, we rose to life; and by His Ascension, we are spiritually seated with Him in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6–7). He has gone to prepare a place for us, promising: **“Where I am, there shall also my servant be”** (John 12:26; 14:3). This is the hope of the Tewahedo faithful—that through the faith which enters within the veil, where the Forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus (Hebrews 6:20), we too shall overcome and sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:21).

Therefore, let our hearts not be weighed down by the dust of the earth. As the priest cries in the Divine Liturgy: **“Let your thoughts be above where Christ is; let your hearts be in heaven; know where you stand!”** Let us pray with the words of His High Priestly prayer: **“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory”** (John 17:24).

We look forward to that day when the gates shall lift up their heads, and the everlasting doors shall be opened (Psalm 24:7–10), joining every creature in heaven and on earth to sing: **“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever”** (Revelation 5:13–14).

Christ has ascended in glory!

Glory be to God. Amen.