

This booklet contains two works of art each for Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. I have included Giotto twice, in part because he is a favorite of mine, but also because his artwork depicts so much of the story of Scripture. Most of these artworks are very old; one is even a very early work from the 6th century.

Juliet Benner, in her book *Contemplative Vision*, describes the connection she found between helping people carefully notice a piece of sacred art and helping them see how God is at work in their lives. She says, "I discovered the enormous potential of physical seeing as a doorway to spiritual seeing...I was teaching a way of encountering the Word behind both the words of Scripture and the artist's meditation on Scripture...As we prayerfully gaze on the painting, we enter the scene it depicts - into its time and place. When we do this, all time becomes present time and we are led into the eternal presence - into the One who is ever present to us. Such openness allows us to be filled more completely with the Spirit and drawn into a deeper relationship with God."

Here are questions to ponder when viewing the artwork:

What is the first thing you notice when you look at the artwork? Why do you think your attention lands there?

Is there anything about the story or subject included by the artist that is a new insight for you? Is there something you think the artist left out that should have been included?

What postures are represented in these paintings? Is there a way that they can inform the posture of our own bodies as we pray?

A painting is a moment frozen in time. What do you think happens next? What would the next image include?

Is there anything new that you can learn from the painting about the story or subject, or even about God?

John Drury says "worship and looking at pictures require the same kind of attention - a mixture of curiosity with a relaxed readiness to let things suggest themselves in their own good time" (quoted in *Contemplative Vision*).

Molly Ruch

## Ascension

Christ's Ascension is therefore also our own, upon the glory of the Head rests the hope of the body. On this holy day, we have received not only the assurance of entering into possession of eternal glory, but we have already entered into the heights of heaven with Christ Jesus. (Pope Leo, Sermon 1 De Ascensione Domini c. iv)

The Ascended Christ sings to us: Lift up your hearts! Our chorus replies: We lift them up unto the Lord! He yearns to embrace us in the arms of His ascended love so that the contagion of His benevolence might grow into forgiveness that is neither resentfully nor reluctantly offered to others. He longs that His ascended truth might be articulated through us as the oracles that tell of His future coming and judgment. For if His Holy Spirit is to descend into our hearts and souls, we must be lifted up above all things earthly and mundane, seeking those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (Col. 3:3)

*William J Martin, from the blog, "The Anglican Way."*





Adriaen van Overbeke - Antwerp 16th Century. This narrow painting is part of a triptych, painted on the inside of a wooden shutter that opened to reveal three related paintings.

## Pentecost

The name "Pentecost" comes from the word for 50, as it was 50 days following Easter that the Spirit came upon the disciples. But it is also known as Whitsunday, which could refer to the white robes worn by those baptized on this day, but also is thought to derive from the Anglo-Saxon word 'wit,' which means 'understanding' and acknowledges the disciples being filled with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit.



From The Rabbula Gospels (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, cod. Plut. I, 56), a 6th-century illuminated Syriac Gospel Book.



Pentecost by Giotto 1310-1318

Through the Holy Spirit comes our restoration to paradise, our ascension into the kingdom of heaven, our return to the adoption of sons, our liberty to call God our Father, our being made partakers of the grace of Christ, our being called children of light, our sharing in eternal glory, and, in a word, our being brought into a state of all "fullness of blessing," both in this world and in the world to come, of all the good gifts that are in store for us, by promise hereof, through faith, beholding the reflection of their grace as though they were already present, we await the full enjoyment."

*St. Basil the Great, "On the Holy Spirit"*

Trinity



Andrei Rublev, Russian 15th Century

The Trinity  
ca. 1390–96  
Agnolo Gaddi, Italian



The Church, though dispersed through our the whole world, even to the ends of the earth, has received from the apostles and their disciples this faith: [She believes] in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who became incarnate for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations of God, and the advents, and the birth from a virgin, and the passion, and the resurrection from the dead, and the ascension into heaven in the flesh of the beloved Christ Jesus, our Lord, and His [future] manifestation from heaven in the glory of the Father "to gather all things in one," . . .

*Against Heresies Book I Chapter X by Irenaeus 120-202*

For if there is one God of the universe, the Father of Christ, "of whom are all things;" and one Lord Jesus Christ, our [Lord], "by whom are all things;" and also one Holy Spirit, who wrought in Moses, and in the prophets and apostles;

*The Epistle of Ignatius to the Philippians Chapter by Ignatius 30-107*