



SYNAXARIA OF THE PENTECOSTARION

by Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos

THURSDAY of THE ASCENSION

On this day, the Thursday of the sixth week of Pascha, we celebrate the Ascension of our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Verses

Thou didst sit at the right hand of the Father, O Word,
Granting unto Thine initiates a most steadfast faith.

Synaxarion

When Christ was with the Disciples before His Passion, He promised them the coming of the All-Holy Spirit, saying: “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you.” And again: “When He is come, He will teach you all the truth.” For this reason, after His Arising from the dead, being seen of them for forty days, not always eating and drinking with them, but at intervals, He gave them firmer proof of His Resurrection. Finally, after making many promises concerning the Kingdom of God, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but await there the coming of the All-Holy Spirit, since they were to be baptized through Him. He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem, so that in that place the preaching of the Gospel might be first confirmed, lest in going to foreign parts they should become easy prey for slander, and because it was necessary for them to be equipped, like soldiers, with the weapons of the Spirit, and go thus into battle against the enemies of Christ.

When the time for the Ascension was at hand, He led them forth to the Mount of Olives (it is called by this name, because it was planted with a great many olive trees), and conversed with them about His proclamation to the ends of the earth, and also about His perpetual Kingdom to come. When He saw that they were going to ask Him what they should do, and

since His immaculate Mother was also present there, He drew their attention to the Angels, who indicated His ascent to Heaven. And while they beheld, He was taken up from their midst, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Being thus escorted by the Angels, who exhorted each other to lift up the heavenly gates and were astonished that His flesh was reddened with blood, He ascended and sat at the right hand of the Father, deifying the flesh, and—I make bold to say—putting it on a level with God. For through the flesh we were reconciled to God and the ancient enmity was destroyed. The Angels stood before the Apostles in the form of men, saying: “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye in amazement, gazing up into Heaven? This Jesus, Whom ye saw as God in the flesh, will come again thus, that is, in the flesh; save not as before, in poverty and gentleness, but with great glory, as ye behold Him now escorted by Angels.”

Then the Apostles, wearied by their gazing, returned from the Mount of Olives. This is very close to Jerusalem, by a distance of two thousand and forty paces. This is the Way of the Sabbath. Thus was it enjoined on Moses to walk so many paces on the Sabbath, because this was the distance from the Tabernacle of witness to the camp of the Jews. It was permitted for worshippers to go out there on the Sabbath, but not to extend their journey any further. For this reason it was called the Way of the Sabbath. Hence, it seems to some that the Ascension of Christ took place on the Sabbath, but this is rather improbable.

When they returned, the Apostles went up to the upper room, in which they remained, together with the Myrrh-Bearing Women and the Mother of the Word, occupying themselves in fasting, prayer, and supplications and awaiting the advent of the All-Holy Spirit, according to the promise.

O Christ our God, Who didst ascend in glory, have mercy on us. Amen.

