WISDOM CALLS

Summer 2024 • Vol. 31 No.2

"Return to the Light"

Wisdom Calls is the quarterly bulletin of the Queen of Heaven Gnostic Church

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Regular Events

Gnostic Holy Eucharist
High Mass with Homily, Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall, Celebrant
Every Sunday 11 AM

Our real nature is divine. Because we are divine, we have infinite strength and wisdom at our command, provided we can free ourselves of the obstacles in our personality, which stand in the way of our conscious union with the indwelling God.

The Holy Eucharist [or Mass] is so designed that it may remove the barriers separating the human and divine natures in ourselves. The Queen of Heaven Gnostic Church of the Ecclesia Gnostica invites all who seek this mystic union, to partake of the Eucharist, and of the other mysteries [sacraments] which it administers. No barrier of creed, race, or status is erected around the altar of the Gnosis. Please join us for this traditional and inspiring service.

Monthly Sophia Service
Devotion to Our Lady Sophia
This devotional service, unique to our rite, is a singularly meaningful and mystical experience dedicated to the Divine Feminine. The service includes the blessing of the rose, and culminates in the Litany of Love, in which love is sent forth to all, both the seen and unseen. (See schedule for details.)

UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE, ALL EVENTS THIS QUARTER WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE CHURCH ADDRESS

WATCH EMAIL ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR SCHEDULE CHANGES

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A Homily for the Feast of the Ascension

Return to the Light

Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

Although not particularly emphasized in mainstream Christendom, the Ascension of the Christ has been of great and central importance to Gnostics throughout history. The importance of the Ascension to the Gnostic rests on two principle points: the first that, according to the Gnostics, Jesus delivered the deepest and most profound mysteries following the Ascension, and secondly that the Ascension of Christ conveys the promise of our own spiritual ascension and return to the Light, a theme central to all Gnostic teachings.

Mainstream tradition teaches that Jesus ascended bodily (in a physical body) into heaven. The Gnostics, along with other heterodox Jewish sects existing at the time of Christ, disagreed with this idea of a resurrection and ascension of the physical body. Based upon the mysteries to which they were heirs, the Gnostics proposed that the ascension took place in a spiritual body. As stated in the Hermetic Scriptures, "Mortal can not draw near mortal, transitory to everlasting, nor corruptible to incorrupt." It became very obvious to early Christians that Christians did not physically resurrect and ascend into heaven. Those Christians who had no paradigm beyond the physical for interpreting the promises of Christ required some way to explain it. The mainstream teaching developed that, as people did not bodily resurrect and ascend into heaven directly after death, then it would happen at the Apocalypse, in the last days. The mainstream substituted an eschatological phenomenon in place of the immanent promises of Christ.

The Gnostics teach that the promises of Jesus concerning the resurrection and ascension of human beings are indeed immanent, but spiritual and interior rather than physical and external in nature. To the Gnostic, ascension is an interior ascent of transcendence into higher states of consciousness, described as realms existing beyond this physical world and yet in some mysterious way shining through it. Historians of philosophy and religion call this form of experience ascensional mysticism, yet all that is called ascensional mysticism does not have the indelibly transformative character of the Gnostic ascension. The salvific nature of the Gnostic experience of ascension has to do with the specific framework and context of the Gnostic mythos and mysteries, although these mysteries do not belong to Gnostic Christianity alone. The character of the ascension depends entirely upon the direction and goal of the ascension, which for the Gnostic is the return to the Light.

St. Paul describes just such an ascent in his *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*:

> "I knew of a man in Christ, about fourteen years ago, such was caught up to the third heaven: and I knew such a man, who whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter."

In the *Chaldean Oracles* this ascent in consciousness depends on the transcendence of the physical body: "Believe thyself to be out of body and so thou art; for divine things are not accessible to mortals who fix their minds on body; it is for those who strip themselves naked, who speed aloft to the height." This focus on transcendence of the material body does not mean a despising or self-destructive denial of the flesh. Such denial is really another form of attachment and enslavement, a negative attachment in such a case, on which we are warned in the *Gospel of Philip*, "Fear not the flesh nor love it. If you fear it, it will gain mastery over you. I f you love it, it will swallow

and paralyze you." The connection of ascension with the image of stripping oneself naked is further echoed in the *Gospel of Thomas*, "Jesus said: When you take off your clothing without being ashamed, and take your clothes and put them under your feet as the little children and tread on them, then shall you behold the Son of the Living One and you shall not fear." The point here is that the transcendence of the body must be accomplished without being ashamed of the flesh. Jesus makes a metaphor to the image of little children dancing naked and free. Almost everyone has at some time in their childhood taken off their clothes and run around naked in an innocent expression of freedom and joy. For the Gnostics the ascent is not some dour hatred and fear of the flesh but a joyous and ecstatic transcendence of the limitations of bodily consciousness. If we strip ourselves naked, if we relinquish the coverings placed about us by the archons, then, in our ascent, the archons cannot detain us; they cannot even see us. We are caught up in ecstasy, which translated from the Greek means "being outside of oneself." Ecstasy means to be out of the body and the system of which it is a manifestation. It means freedom.

Yet, the Gnostic experience of ascension is not simply an out of body experience. There are a plethora of accounts of people who have experienced traveling out of the body or journeying on the astral, who have been meditating or journeying for years, but who have not returned to the Light. These are modalities of transcendence through which individuals may experience the Enlightenment of Gnosis, but the modalities in themselves cannot guarantee it, nor are they a viable substitute for the genuine experience. The spiritual ascension requires a capacity for Gnosis, an orientation toward the mysteries of the interior life, and the descent of a grace from on high. We must have that within us that can ascend and return to the Light before the light-stream can come to us and take us up. To have this within us requires a fervent desire for transcendence and freedom.

If we sincerely long for the Light the experiences will come in their own time. Yet to have this longing, to truly ascend, we must remember the place from which we have come. To acquire this desire requires a wakefulness to the memory of the higher glories beyond this world. As Mani so beautifully states, "Remember the ascent into the joyful air." It may not be possible for us to fully return to the Light while we are in this embodied existence, but we can receive a small taste, a whiff of the essence of this ascent, enough for us to remember the place from which we have come and to recognize the way back.

To awaken this memory, we must open our spiritual eyes to the First Mystery, the fountainhead and source of all being. As stated in the *Chaldean Oracles*, "Let the immortal depths of the soul be opened, and open all thine eyes at once to the above." The Kabbalah describes the highest as the innermost, and so in the *Pistis Sophia* there is reference to the highest Aeon and the First Mystery as the Inmost of the Inmosts. "Then were all the powers of the height singing hymns to the Inmost of the Inmosts so that whole world heard their ceaseless voices." To find this memory and this desire we must turn the powers and contemplations of our souls inward; we must recognize that the inmost core of our being is alien to the system of the world, that we are strangers to this material world.

Even then, the desire for Gnosis and the memory of the Place of Light alone is not sufficient; the ascent requires a spiritual assistance as well. The soul requires the wings of spirit to make the "flight into the sun." The soul cannot get there on her own steam; she requires a helper. In the *Apocalypse of Paul*, Paul is accompanied by a helper spirit. In the *Pistis Sophia*, Sophia rises by means of the light-power given her by the

Logos. In mainstream tradition, the Virgin Mary is assumed into the heavenly courts by her bridegroom, the Christ. In the story of the *Pistis Sophia*, even Jesus requires the descent of his own Light-Power to ascend into the Pleroma:

> "So it was that when the Light-Power came down on Jesus it gradually surrounded him altogether. Then Jesus ascended on high, shining most exceedingly with an unmeasured light; and the disciples were gazing after him, not one of them speaking until he went up to heaven, but they were all in great silence."

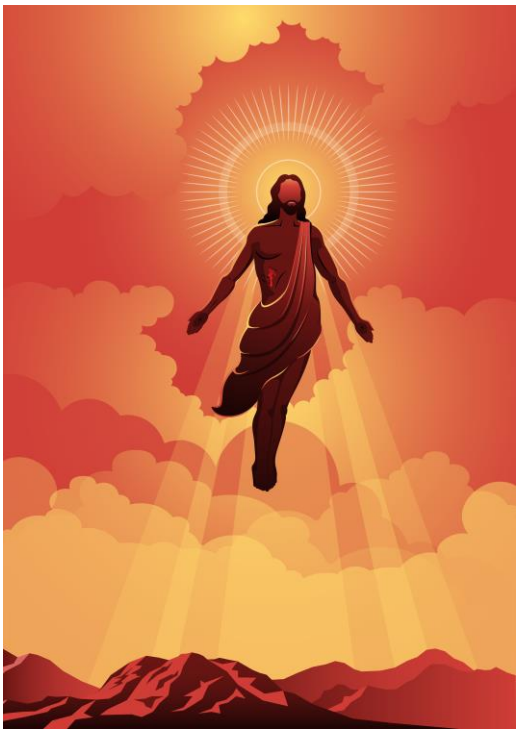
The Gnostic sources differ from the mainstream in describing the return of Jesus directly following the ascension:

> "Then the heavens opened, and they saw Jesus coming down, shining most exceedingly, for he shone more than at the time he had gone up to the Heavens, so that no man of earth can speak of the light that was on him."

He then teaches and initiates the disciples in the most profound mysteries, which they were not previously able to receive. He describes for them the aeons of light transcending the earthly sphere and gives them the grace to ascend there. The *Apocalypse of Paul* gives witness to such an ascension in the spirit:

> "And then the seventh heaven opened and we went up to the Ogdoad, And I saw the twelve apostles. They greeted me, and we went up to the ninth heaven. I greeted those who were in the ninth heaven, and we went up to the tenth heaven. And I greeted my fellow spirits."

At the highest heaven he greets his fellow spirits. This too is what we must remember for ourselves; that we have a fellowship of spiritual beings to which we truly belong, who are the company of the Highest Aeon. Through wakefulness to the memory of our origin and the grace from on high we can open our eyes to the above and glimpse that place where we are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints, and of the household of God." We can remember the house from which we have come and ascend on high and greet our fellow spirits. In this manner, as stated in the *Pistis Sophia*, we shall speed aloft to the height and join that light such as "no man of earth can speak of the light that was on him." So may that Light keep us and illumine our way back unto the Light from which we have come and unto which we shall ascend when the "consummation of all consummations taketh place," when we see our star shine forth.



Calendar of events
Summer 2024

MAY

SUNDAY, May 5, 2024 11am
5th Sunday after Easter
Intent: The Human Potential for Liberation
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, May 5, 2024 2:30 pm
Sophia Service
A Devotion to our Lady Sophia
Officiant: Quinton

SUNDAY, May 12, 2024 11:00 am
Ascension Sunday
Intent: *Return to the Light*
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

Ascension Sunday commemorates the culminating event in the story of Jesus – his ascent into the Pleroma. This event symbolizes the promise of our own return to the light as well. Gnostic sources tell us that the most potent mysteries and teachings of the Savior were transmitted not only after the Resurrection but after the Ascension. On this day we extinguish the Paschal candle to remind us that the light to which we aspire is a light beyond this world, unto which we may go when we too ascend on high.

SUNDAY, May 19, 2024 10:30 am
The Gnostic Holy Rosary
A pre-eucharistic recitation and singing of the Gnostic Holy Rosary/Sophia Rosary

SUNDAY, May 19, 2024 11:00 am
Pentecost Sunday
Coming of the Holy Spirit
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

Pentecost is a traditional date for Confirmation, which is the Sacrament of Holy Chrism. *See special events flyer for details.*

SUNDAY, May 26, 2024 11:00 am
Trinity Sunday
Devotion to the Triune Deity
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

JUNE

SUNDAY, June 2, 2024 11:00 am
1st Sunday after Trinity
The Transforming Power of the Holy Spirit
Celebrant: Rev. Quinton Ask

SUNDAY, June 2, 2024 2:30 pm
Sophia Service
A Devotion to our Lady Sophia
Officiant: Quinton

SUNDAY, June 9, 2024 11:00 am
2nd Sunday after Trinity
God as Light
Celebrant: Rev. Quinton Ask

SUNDAY, June 16, 2024 11:00 am
3rd Sunday after Trinity
God as Ruler of The Angels
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, June 23, 2024 10:30 am
The Gnostic Holy Rosary
A pre-eucharistic recitation and singing of the Gnostic Holy Rosary/Sophia Rosary

SUNDAY, June 23, 2024 11:00 am
4th Sunday after Trinity
God as Love
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, June 30, 2024 11:00 am
5th Sunday after Trinity
Intent: *God as Peace*
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

JULY

SUNDAY, July 7, 2024 11:00 am
6th Sunday after Trinity
Intent: *Steadfast Dedication*
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, July 7, 2024 2:30 pm
Sophia Service
A Devotion to our Lady Sophia
Officiant: Quinton

SUNDAY, July 14, 2024 11:00 am
7th Sunday after Trinity
Purity as a Condition for Union with God
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, July 21, 2024 10:30 am
The Gnostic Holy Rosary
A pre-eucharistic recitation and singing of the Gnostic Holy Rosary/Sophia Rosary

SUNDAY, July 21, 2024 11:00 am
8*th* Sunday after Trinity
Wisdom
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall

SUNDAY, July 21, 2024 2:30 pm
Magdalene Sunday
Vespers of Sophia and Magdalen
Intent: *The Consort of the Logos*
Officiant: Rev. Quinton

This special service celebrates the Feast of the Holy Mary of Magdala. Gnostics have esteemed Mary Magdalen above all other disciples, as the embodiment of Sophia and the beloved Consort of Christ.

SUNDAY, July 28, 2024 11:00 am
9*th* Sunday after Trinity
Confidence
Celebrant: Rt. Rev. Steven Marshall.

NOTE:

Continuing from last quarter of this year we have scheduled a special Sunday afternoon service: the Vespers of Sophia and Magdalen with Healing Service on the Sunday preceding the feast day of Holy Mary of Magdala. See Calendar for specific dates and time.

We have two in-person, monthly, Sunday services added to our weekly scheduled services for this quarter: the Devotion to Our Lady Sophia with the Blessing of the Rose and a call and response recitation and singing of the Gnostic Holy Rosary/Sophia Rosary, All are invited to attend these services in honor of the Divine Feminine. See Calendar for specific dates and time.

For more information please visit the Gnostic Archives: www.gnosis.org

Queen of Heaven Website
www.gnosticchurchportland.org

Pentecost Sunday

May 19, 2024

Holy Gnostic Eucharist at 11 am

At Pentecost we celebrate the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and into communion with all Gnostics, as the Source of Wisdom, the Sanctifier and Comforter, and our Celestial Mother and Consoler. Gnostics have always recognized the Holy Spirit as a feminine power of the Holy Trinity.

Confirmation also called the sacrament of Holy Chrism will be administered to those who have requested it and prepared themselves to receive it.

(Call Father Steven at 503-233-0854 for requirements.)

Church News

This year we observed Holy Week with a small complement of clergy. Father Steven conducted the rituals of each night, assisted by Quinton and Emily. Many thanks to Emily, Bran and Afonso for all of their assistance in cleaning and preparing the chapel for the holidays. Katya from Berkeley, California joined us again this year. Many thanks to her for helping with the set up and preparations for Holy Week. Thanks go to all those who contributed to the success of the Three Holy Days preceding Easter Sunday. The people in attendance greatly enhanced the inspiration brought forth with each service.

On Easter Sunday, we celebrated a glorious Resurrection of the Light with an Easter Mass and social event following. Thank you, Katya, for playing the Easter Bunny and providing us with such a wonderful Easter party with Easter eggs full of treasure and a splendid feast. A fabulous time was had by all in attendance.

A Special thanks to Afonso for his donation and setting up of a dedicated computer system for Zooming our services over the internet. All of our remote attendees are loving it.

Note: The Queen of Heaven Gnostic Church is the Portland parish of the Ecclesia Gnostica, a Christian Gnostic Sacramental Church with its headquarters based in Los Angeles, California. As a sacramental, liturgical church, we employ chant, candles, incense, bells, vestments, and other accoutrements for the purpose of elevating consciousness out of the ordinary. The structure and content of our liturgies are age old and inspired by the practices and metaphorical writings of the early Gnostics of the 1st through 4th centuries.

We continue an established and recognized, apostolic tradition without moralizing judgments or dogmatic statements of belief in a setting that fosters mystical inquiry and spiritual understanding. We retain the early gnostic practice of ordaining women on an equal basis with men and revere the feminine aspect of Deity in the fashion of our Gnostic forebears.

For more information please visit the Gnostic Archives: “gnosis.org”
And the Queen of Heaven homepage at: “gnosticchurchportland.org”