

A Pantomime of the Story of Christ's Ascension, According to St. Luke
A Silent Play by Sylvia Dorham, ©2020

A pantomime is a method of telling a story without using words.

Here, we use pantomime to tell the story of the Ascension of Jesus. The story is very dramatic, and if you take the time to develop your character, it can be quite funny. When using humor, please remember that this is a sacred subject, and must be treated with respect by refraining from discourteous gestures or portraying the characters as foolish.

In a pantomime, it is easy to forget that all action must face the audience. Take special care to “block” or arrange the movements so that no player’s back is ever toward the audience.

Design the costumes so it is clear who is Jesus and who is an Angel.

Make sure there are plenty of women among the Apostles and Disciples.

Use exaggerated facial expressions and gestures to convey the story – when you use your whole body, it’s also more interesting to watch. Move slowly and deliberately so the audience can follow the story line.

Some directors may want to add a soundtrack played at a very low level behind the action, others will prefer to enjoy the silence that falls over the whole room when the audience becomes engrossed in the story.

Characters:

Apostles and Disciples – at least eleven, more is better

Emmaus Disciple A

Emmaus Disciple B

Peter

Jesus

John

The Theotokos

Angel A

Angel B

Feel free to make copies of this script for use in school, parish, or home settings.

SCENE I

Two Emmaus Disciples come running, huffing and puffing, into a room where eleven Apostles and others are seated around a table talking excitedly.

Peter greets them with open arms, smiling. He points to each open palm, like pointing to Jesus' wounded hands, and lifts his palms upward to show "arisen" with joyful, excited face. He points to his chest, then to his eyes, then upward to say, "I saw him!"

Two Emmaus Disciples put their palms on their cheeks and open their mouths and eyes wide with surprise. They put up their first fingers to say "wait!"

Two Emmaus Disciples use an exaggerated walk to show what they were doing and turn to look at "Jesus" who is not really there.

Two Emmaus Disciples continue walking and nod their heads as if listening.

Two Emmaus Disciples open a door and gesture invisible Jesus to come in.

Two Emmaus Disciples pour wine and put a loaf of bread on the imaginary table. Their eyes get big in surprise and they jump backward (if they fall over, it will add some humor to the pantomime).

Two Emmaus Disciples look at Apostles and burst open their fists into the air to show "Poof! He was gone!"

Two Emmaus Disciples pantomime turning and running all the way back to Jerusalem and into the room where they are now. They turn all the way around so they can look at everyone there, eyes wide with wonder and surprise.

Jesus suddenly stands among them. He smiles and holds out his hands in greeting to the Apostles and disciples.

Everyone but Jesus falls to the floor (Add some humor by having some "faint" in funny poses).

Jesus helps them up.

Apostles and Disciples bunch up and crowd into a corner, shivering with fear. Some point at Jesus, some cover their eyes, some jump up and down.

Jesus shows them each wound, smiling. He points to the table and then into his open mouth to say, "Give me something to eat."

John gets a plate from the table and brings it to him happily.

Jesus smiles, picks up “fish” from off the plate, puts it in his mouth and munches contentedly. He hiccups and pats his chest with a laugh.

Apostles and Disciples gather around him in a joyful (quiet!) clamor.

Jesus takes both his mother’s hands, smiles lovingly, and kisses them.

The Theotokos puts her hands on either side of his face and looks at him with love and joy.

SCENE II

Jesus turns away and beckons them to follow.

Apostles and Disciples hurry after him.

All march around the stage to show him leading them out to Bethany.

Jesus holds up his hand to call for a halt. He turns to face them.

Apostles and Disciples group together in front of him, eager, smiling.

Jesus looks firmly at them, points in a semi-circle at all the Apostles and Disciples, and points to the ground twice to say, “Stay here in Jerusalem.”

Jesus raises his arms and simulates rain falling with his fingers as he lowers his arms to show the Holy Spirit descending. He points to them and the ground again to reiterate, “Stay in Jerusalem until he comes.”

Apostles and Disciples nod their understanding.

Jesus lifts an arm and makes a big Sign of the Cross over them all in blessing. As he does so, he backs up until he is offstage.

Apostles and Disciples look heavenward as he leaves. They turn in circles with their eyes on the ceiling, some banging into each other. Their joy and excitement turns to bewilderment and disappointment, but they are peaceful. There is no panic.

Angels appear side by side and lift up both hands with a questioning face to say, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven?”

Angels with open mouths point at men and with the backs of their hands push up under their own jaws to show the Apostles and Disciples to close their mouths.

Angels point into heaven with their whole hands, show “wait” with index fingers, point to wounds in the palm to show “Jesus” and then sweep arms down from heaven to show Jesus returning.

Peter nods. After a pause, gestures to the Apostles and Disciples to follow him back to Jerusalem.

Apostles and Disciples stumble off stage, rubbing their eyes, looking behind them, talking with heads together.

Curtain.