



## On your marks

Ascension Day marks a very strange event: Jesus was taken back to heaven, so you would think his disciples would be sad and devastated at his leaving them once more. Instead we read in Luke 24:52 that once he'd gone, 'they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem very happy'. This assembly or talk explores the idea that this good-bye was a happy good-bye, not a sad one because his friends knew he was with them even though he'd gone.

## Get set

You'll need something to write on and with that everyone can see (OHP or similar).

## Go!

Write up the word 'goodbye'.

Ask if anyone knows where the word 'goodbye' comes from?

It's a shortened form of the words, 'God be with you'. (Write this next to goodbye.) So every time you say good-bye to someone, you're actually saying that you want God to be close to them. It's a *blessing* in disguise! Perhaps you want God to be with them as they set out on a dangerous journey. Or maybe you know you're going to miss them and you want to be sure God will be close to them even if you can't be.

Does anyone know the French word for 'goodbye'? It's 'au revoir', which really means 'Till we see each other again' or 'See you again soon!' Isn't that hopeful? You're saying, 'I'm looking forward to seeing you soon!'

And German is 'Auf Wiedersehen' which means the same as the French.

Write up these other words for goodbye and the translation 'see you again soon'.

Does anyone know any other words for goodbye in other languages? I wonder if these really mean the lovely blessing 'God be with you' or the happy hopeful 'See you again soon'?

## Tell the story

I wonder if someone has ever left you without saying goodbye? (Use an example from your own life eg when my daughter was cross with me, she went off to school for the day without saying goodbye. That made me feel very sad.)

The first time Jesus left his friends, there wasn't time to say good-bye. Do you remember? Jesus was arrested in the garden at night time, and his friends were so scared they all ran away. And Jesus was killed on the cross before they had time to say good-bye to him. I wonder how that made them feel?

But that wasn't the end of the story! On Easter Day Jesus came back to life and they all met him again. So instead of the long good-bye they had thought, it was a big hello! Can anyone remember some of the times Jesus met his friends after he'd come back to life? (Prompt them to remember Mary outside the tomb, Thomas, the Road to Emmaus, breakfast on the beach).



Jesus was with them again, but in a special way - he could be anywhere, he could walk through walls and there was something different about the way he looked, as people didn't always recognise him at first. But he was with them.

Then 40 days after Easter, he called his friends up onto a mountain near Jerusalem and told them all about the job he had for them to do - to tell people all over the world what they had seen him say and do. And in case they were feeling a bit scared of doing such a big thing, he promised them that his Holy Spirit would come and help them do this job. This was great news, because Jesus' Holy Spirit was just the same as Jesus - so he wasn't saying 'I'm leaving for ever', he was saying 'see you again soon!' And then Jesus blessed them - perhaps he was saying 'God be with you' or 'goodbye'?

And as they watched, he was taken up to heaven to be with his Father God as well. So his friends weren't sad, as we sometimes are when we say good-bye. They were very glad that Jesus could be with his Father and with them too. Although in one way, Jesus had gone, they knew he was still with them in another, better way and that they would see him again soon.

And they did! But that's another story for next week.

### **Prayer**

Jesus, we remember all the people who are sad because they haven't had time to say goodbye to someone they love. Help them to know that you are with them all, wherever they are. Thank you that we know you are always with us too. Amen