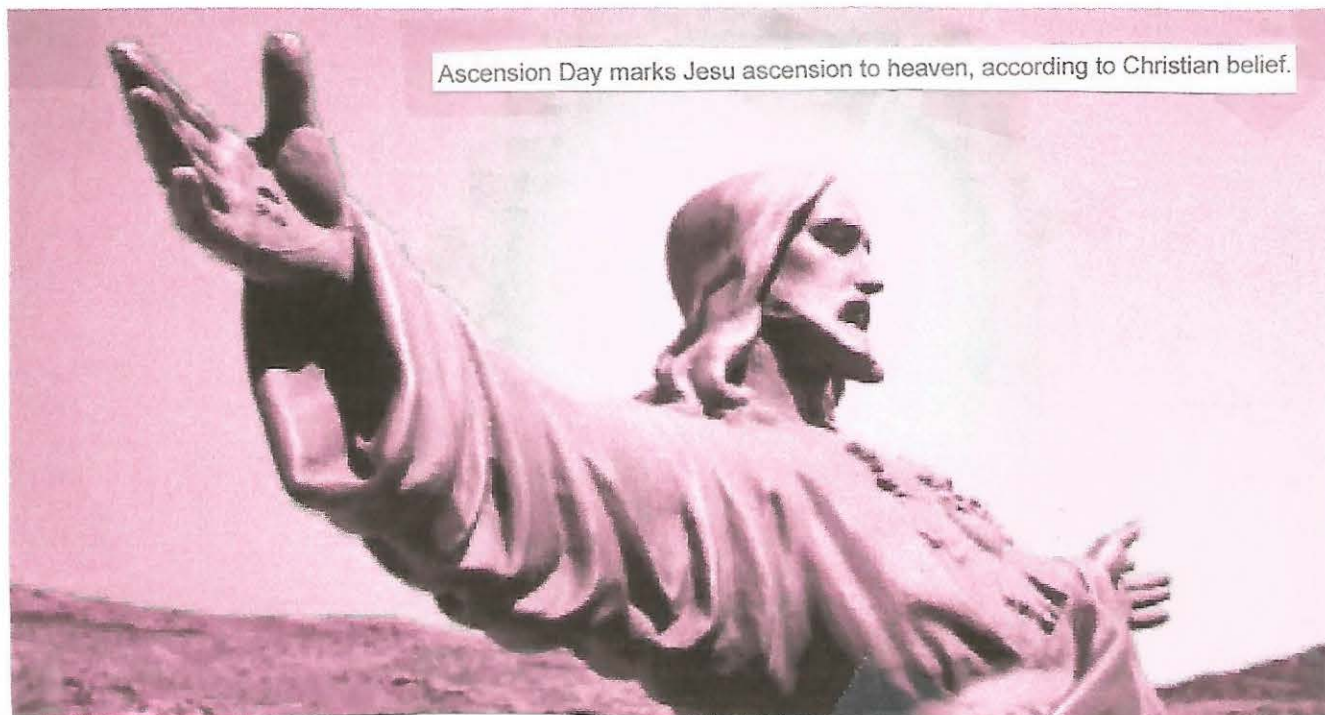


HIMMELFAHRTSTAG / ASCENSION DAY



What do people do?

Christians attend special church services on Ascension Day to celebrate Jesus' ascension into heaven. In some rural Catholic areas, a procession (*Oeschprozession*, *Flurprozession*) of religious banners is held in the fields around the villages. Four different Bible texts are read at four 'stations' during these processions.

The International Charlemagne Prize is presented in the city of Aachen on Ascension Day. It is presented to someone who made a valuable contribution to humanity and world peace, particularly in the field of western European understanding and community. It is named after Charlemagne (Charles the Great), who was the king of the Franks from 768 CE until 814 CE. Aachen was his capital city and he put a lot of effort to establish peace between warring tribes in and around his kingdom.

Ascension Day is also known as Father's Day (*Vatertag*) or Men's Day (*Maennertag*, *Herrentag*) in some parts of Germany. Groups of male friends or male relatives spend a day together. They often take part in an outdoor activity, such as a walk in the country or a horse-and-cart ride. Afterwards, they have a communal meal.

Public life

Ascension Day is a public holiday in all German states. Post offices, banks, stores and other businesses are closed. However, some tourist stores may be open and stores at railway stations, airports and along highways are usually open. There are some restrictions on selling alcohol, public performances and dancing. Public transport services may run as usual, a reduced service or no service depending on where one lives or wants to travel.

Background

Ascension Day is an important holiday for many Christians, especially Catholics. It has been a public holiday in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1936. It was a public holiday in the German Democratic Republic from 1950 until 1966 and in 1990, when Germany was united.

Ascension Day also celebrated in other countries such as [Canada](#), [the Netherlands](#) and [the United States](#).