

At first glance, the Ascension of the Lord seems bittersweet. Jesus, following the Resurrection, is taken up into heaven. The disciples stand there looking into the sky, wondering what comes next. There is a temptation to think that Jesus is leaving them behind.

But the Gospel tells us something very different.

The Incarnation, God becoming man, and the Ascension, Christ returning to the Father, are much more than book ends of a nice story, Jesus coming to earth and leaving the earth. The Gospel of Matthew begins with the announcement that Jesus is Emmanuel — “God with us.” And it ends with Jesus promising, “I am with you always.” Matthew wants us to understand something essential about the Christian life: the Ascension is not the departure of Christ from the world. It is the beginning of a new and deeper way in which Christ remains present to his people.

Notice that Matthew says the eleven disciples went to the mountain Jesus had designated. Mountains in Scripture are places of encounter, revelation, and transformation. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus ascends a mountain to proclaim the Beatitudes, revealing the path of the Kingdom. He is transfigured on a mountain, where his divine glory shines forth before Peter, James, and John. Even temptation takes place on a mountain, where Jesus rejects the false promises of worldly power in fidelity to the Father. And now, on this final mountain, the risen Lord commissions his disciples and promises to remain with them always. Matthew calls them “disciples,” not simply “apostles.” A disciple is one who lives in relationship with the Master. Christianity is not first a system of ideas or moral principles. It is communion with Jesus Christ here and now.

Even after encountering the risen Christ, Matthew says, “they worshiped, but they doubted.” What an honest and hopeful detail. The Lord does not wait for perfect faith before drawing near to his disciples. He approaches them even in their weakness. And he continues to approach us in ours. He is drawing us up a spiritual mountain.

Many people today carry a quiet loneliness in their hearts. Even surrounded by activity and noise, there can still be an emptiness, a longing for lasting companionship and meaning. The Ascension reminds us that we are not abandoned. Christ remains with his Church. He remains with you. Not vaguely. Not symbolically. But truly and personally.

And yet, the Gospel also teaches us that the presence of Jesus grows stronger within us when we share him with others. Jesus says, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.” Faith is never meant to remain private or self-contained. The more we attempt to hold onto faith only for ourselves, the weaker it becomes. But when we share Christ — through acts of charity, encouragement, witness, evangelization, service, forgiveness — the life of Christ deepens within our own hearts.

This is part of the mystery of discipleship. We make present what we proclaim. In a certain sense, every Christian shares in the Church’s apostolic mission: to make Jesus visible in the world.

Sometimes we think evangelization means having all the answers or giving theological lectures. But often it is much simpler. It is bringing the presence of Christ into another person’s concrete life. A visit to someone who is sick. A word of

hope to someone discouraged. A quiet witness of fidelity and joy. A life shaped by prayer, mercy, and love.

In today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus tells the apostles to wait for "the promise of the Father." We do not continue Christ's mission through human strength alone. The Church lives because the Holy Spirit animates her. Christ is present in his Word, in the sacraments, in the Eucharist, in the communion of believers, and in the mission of the Church throughout the world, all through the action of the Holy Spirit.

The Ascension therefore is not an ending. It is a commissioning to continue the story of salvation. Christ ascends so that his presence may fill the whole world through his Body, the Church, through believers like you and me. As we celebrate the Ascension, we hear again the promise that sustains the Church in every age: "I am with you always." In moments of certainty and doubt, in strength and weakness, in suffering and joy, the risen Lord remains with his people — until the completion of the age.

And perhaps the most profound part of today's Gospel is the way Jesus makes this promise. In English we hear, "I am with you always." But the Greek is even more striking. Jesus literally says: "*I am with you all the days.*" Not simply "sometimes." Not merely in extraordinary moments. Not only when life is easy or faith feels strong. But *all the days* — every ordinary day, every difficult day, every joyful day, every painful day, every uncertain day.

His presence is not vague or theoretical. Christ is concretely present with his Church through the power of the Holy Spirit.

He is present in the Eucharist, in the sacraments, in his Word, in the communion of the faithful, and in the lives of his disciples.

And the more actively we live our faith, the more deeply we begin to recognize that abiding presence. The more we pray, worship, serve, evangelize, forgive, and love — the more aware we become that we are not walking through life alone. That is what gave courage to the apostles after the Ascension. And it is what gives courage to us today.

The risen Lord remains with his people. He accompanies his Church through history and accompanies each disciple personally, every single day. And because He is with us all the days, we can face all the difficulties and uncertainties of life with confidence, hope, and peace. The story of the Gospel, the miraculous presence of Jesus Christ, continues in you and me.