

## **Ascension - Matthew 28:16-20**

Though Matthew does not mention the Ascension, its significance is contained in his solemn conclusion to his Gospel. The setting is a mountain, which are places of special revelation in scripture, like Sinai in the Old Testament and the other mountains in Matthew. The place is Galilee of the Gentiles, the region where Jesus began his ministry. The audience is the Eleven. Like the Magi at the beginning, they worshiped Jesus, though some doubted. They were still people of little faith, a microcosm of the church to come, a mixed field of wheat and weeds.

Fr. Mark Boyer writes in the "Reflection" from *Give Us This Day*, "Maybe the most important word in Jesus' final words to his followers is "Go." A spirituality of mission includes the response of going to where one is commissioned to go and doing what one is commissioned to do. The mission is real, and it requires much effort, especially when it is given to one belonging to a culture of comfort. And teaching by one's example of living righteousness may mean ostracism. Since Matthew's gospel ends with the great commission, no one knows how well the eleven disciples responded to Jesus' words. However, in this day and time it is not too hard to determine how many people on the street where one lives would respond to the same commission."

The most comforting part of the gospel is Jesus' promise to be with always till the end of the age. When we are in deep trouble, or when we are dying, people who care about us often ask, "What can I do for you?" And the answer is: "Exactly what you are doing: just being here with me." What we need and want the most is not any gift anyone can give us but simply themselves, their presence, their "witness." This comes most clear at times of death or emergencies, but it's true all the time. The main reason for divorce is the feeling that your spouse isn't really with you, heart to heart. One of Christ's names is "Emmanuel," which means literally "God with us."

The wonderful thing about being grandparents is that we can be present to our grandchildren in a special way that is different from their parents and in my case to my nieces and nephews, grand and great grand. In a way we are a friend, but related, and we can be neutral, generally. Sometimes they just need someone who will listen to them, or that presence mentioned above.