**ASCENSION Sunday 2023 – 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 scriptures, as Mount Tabor and Mount Sinai in the Old Testament. 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 worshipped 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.

Jesus formally gave the Eleven their mission, which was no longer restricted to Israel; ***all nations were to become his disciples***. They were to be baptized in the name of the Trinity, to experience what Jesus himself experienced at his baptism. ***They were to belong to the divine family of Father, Son, and Spirit***. For the first time in Matthew, ***Jesus commissioned the disciples to teach***. They were to make their own and pass on ***the teaching of the five great discourses of this gospel***, which begins with the Beatitudes. Encouraging and supporting them, would be Jesus himself as Lord of the Church. ***He promised his presence until the end of time.*** The Emmanuel prophecy of the Infancy was now fulfilled. “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us.”

Through the Eucharist, Jesus is truly present among us in the assembly where two or more are gathered in His Name, in the Word of God, and in His Body and Blood, where we go forth and bring his presence to others we meet this week. Unfortunately, when I was a child at St. Mary’s Parish in Dayton, some barely make it out of the parking lot before the effects of the Eucharist have worn off…let alone lasting all week. Even now, how do we keep the Jesus effect alive beyond its expiration date?

I believe simply by changing our mind set. God is with us always. From John’s Gospel, chapter 14, we have: “The Father and I will pitch our tents within you!” So, the celebration of the Eucharist should be a celebration as the culmination of a week-long of the Trinity living within us, rather than an opportunity to recharge our spiritual batteries.

Unless we are with those who are still staring up at the sky. Sister Teresa Maya, of San Antonio, Texas, writes, “How could this be? The disciples had been comforted and taught by Jesus himself! Despite all the joy and wonder of those Resurrection days, here they are looking up! In fact, it takes yet another messenger to jolt them by asking: “Why are you looking up at the sky?”

“So, I wonder about all of us,” she continues. “On this day, are we too, stand with the disciples looking up? Even after we have celebrated Easter for one week after another, even after renewing our profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and even though most of us can witness to *the transformation Christ’s presence* has meant in our lives, we need to ask ourselves: “How many of us find ourselves, more often than not, just looking up?’”

If the Eucharist is a culmination of a weeklong living with the Trinity, then Sundays should be that celebration as in the Eucharist celebrated with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. “And their eyes were opened to the presence of the Lord among them.” Rather than looking *up*, it should be *looking around* or *looking within*. The French poet and essayist, Charles Peguy, once suggested that when we come to the gates of heaven we will all be asked: “But where are the others?”

After all, we are the Body of Christ, we are a faith community and hopefully we will be in heaven by hanging on the coat-tails of all the wonderful people that went before us and coming after us hanging on to us! They are the common everyday saints that will include our parents and parishioners, our relatives and teachers, our friends and neighbors, even those good spiritual writers and *Lives of the Saints* that filled the time in our easy chairs with spiritual thoughts and challenges. “Looking up” sounds like we really don’t know what to do next or what to expect. Instead of looking up, we look around us each day and know that this space is where we end each week but also begin anew with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hopefully by this time we do.