

May 2017

“I am with you always, to the end of the age”. (Mt 28:20)

Matthew ends his Gospel with the final events of Jesus' life on earth. Jesus has risen from the dead, having fulfilled his mission, to proclaim God's healing love for all. He has reopened the way towards fraternity in human history. Matthew sees Jesus as Emmanuel, “God with us”, promised by the prophets and awaited by the People of Israel.

Before returning to the Father, he gather his disciples together, those with whom he had shared his mission most closely, and entrusts the continuation of his work to them. It's a very arduous task! But Jesus reassures them: he will not leave them on their own; he promises to be with them every day, to support, accompany and encourage them “to the end of the age”.

With his help, they will bear witness to their encounter with Him, to his word and his acts of welcome and mercy towards all. In this way, many others will meet him and together form the new people of God, founded on his commandment of love.

We could say that God is happy to be with me, with you and with us every day, to the end of our own individual life stories and that of humankind. But is this really so? Can we truly encounter Him?

“He is nearby, beside me and you. He is in the poor, in the despised, in little ones, in the sick, in those seeking advice, in people deprived of freedom. He is in those who are ugly and in those who are marginalized. ... Jesus said, ‘I was hungry and you gave “me” food¹. Let's learn how to find him there where he is”.²

He is in his Word, which, if put into practice, will renew our lives. He can be found all over the world in the Eucharist. He also works through his ministers, the servants of his people. He is there when we generate harmony around us³. Our prayer to the Father then becomes more effective and we find the light we need for the decisions we make every day.

“I am with you always, to the end of the age”. This promise gives us great hope and encouragement to find him as we go along our way. Let's open our hearts, and our arms too, to be welcoming and to share. Let's do this personally and as communities, in our families and our churches, in our work places and on festive occasions, in our civil and religious associations. By doing so, we will meet Jesus and He will amaze us with joy and light, which are the signs of His presence.

If we start each morning thinking, “Today I want to discover where God wants to meet me!” we too will have wonderful experiences like this:

“My mother in law was very attached to her son, to the point of being jealous. A year ago she was diagnosed with cancer and her only daughter was not able to give her the level of care and help she needed. In that period, I went to a Mariapolis⁴ where I encountered God-Love in a way that changed my life. The first fruit of this “conversion” was the decision to ask my mother-in-law to come and live

¹Cf. Mt 25:35.

²Cf. Chiara Lubich, Word of Life for June 1982.

³Cf. Mt 18:20.

⁴Summer gathering of the Focolare Movement

with us, overcoming my fears about it. The light that had filled my heart helped me to see her with new eyes. I knew I was caring for and helping Jesus in her. To my surprise, she responded to all I did for her with just as much love. The following months certainly involved many sacrifices, but when my mother-in-law passed gently on to the next life, she left us all with a deep sense of peace. It was around that time that I realized I was pregnant, after nine years of waiting! Now our son is the tangible sign of God's love for us".⁵

Letizia Magri

⁵In *"Glimpses of Gospel Life"*, edited by Doriana Zamboni.