

05/12/13 Ascension B

-- I'm sure most of us have seen pictures depicting the Ascension of our Lord. Typically, they show Jesus riding on clouds upward, perhaps with a few angels beneath him. Usually the apostles are standing on the ground looking upward, with a mystical look on their faces.

-- All of this is an attempt to put a mystery into human form. The reality we deal with, though, is that we don't see Jesus in the flesh. We have to trust that God's presence is with us. That involves faith.

-- There's a story one priest told that seems to capture the true meaning of this feast. It's a story of a young boy—about 10-12 years old—whose father works in New York City and takes the subway into work, changing trains along the way.

-- One day he decides he will take his son with him to see his workplace. But he decides that, on the way back, the boy will have to make his own way home.

-- On the way into town, he gives his son careful directions on what train to take, how to transfer trains, and where the stop for home will be. He even writes out directions and points to the maps on the subway train.

-- Understandably, the boy is a bit nervous about going home on his own. When the time comes, his father walks him to the station, reminds him about the directions and the map, and sends him off.

-- The boy gets on the train, looks at the map, and transfers trains where he needs to. He gets on the second train, looks at the map and discovers he only has six stops until he gets home.

-- He finally arrives and, very relieved, gets off the train. His mother is waiting there to take him home. Then he discovers something else. He looks back and sees that his father has gotten off the same train several cars back.

-- His dad comes over, hugs him and tells him that he will always watch over him. And the three of them walk off together.

-- That is how the Lord treats us. The Ascension celebrates the fact that God is always with us, even when he is not physically present. God guides us through life, giving us directions through his Word in the scriptures and through his community, the Church.

-- We witness to Christ's presence by spreading his Word. Most of you do that first and foremost by teaching your children the faith, and by trying to grow in that faith yourself.

-- And all of us, like the disciples who witnessed his physical Ascension, are called to keep alive God's promise of new life. We are his witnesses in the particular corner of the world we occupy.

-- At times, this may seem like a daunting task. We may feel nervous, like the young boy who was asked to navigate the subway system of New York City. We may wonder whether we are up to the task.

-- But our heavenly Father is there, not far from us. This weekend we celebrate Mother's Day. And while God is uniquely a Father, he also demonstrates the caring qualities of a mother. The scriptures testify to this in several passages.

-- If we maintain confidence in the Lord's caring presence, and follow his directions in the Bible and through the teachings of the Church, we need not worry.

-- God is not far from us...he is right there, riding in the train car behind us.