

June

And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Mt 28:20)

Matthew begins his Gospel by recalling that Jesus, whose story he is about to narrate, is 'Emmanuel' (Mt 1:23), which means 'God is with us.' Matthew then concludes his Gospel by repeating these words of Jesus, his promise to remain with us always, even after he has gone back to heaven. He will be 'God is with us' until the end of the time.

Jesus spoke these words to the disciples after he had given them the task of bringing his message to the whole world. He was well aware that he was sending them out like sheep among wolves and that they would face adversity and persecutions (see Mt 10:16-22). This is why he didn't want to leave them alone in their mission. So, at the very moment he was leaving, he promised to stay! They will no longer see him with their eyes, no longer hear his voice, will not be able to touch him, but he will be present in their midst, just as before and indeed more than before. Until then, his presence had been localized in one precise place, in Capernaum, on the lake, on the mountain, or in Jerusalem. From now on, he will be wherever his disciples are.

Jesus was also thinking of all of us living out day after day what can sometimes be a complex lifestyle. Because he was incarnate Love, he might have thought: I would like to be with them always, to share their daily worries, to give them advice; I would like to walk down the streets with them, enter their homes, enliven their joy with my presence. For this reason he wanted to stay with us and make us feel his closeness, his strength, his love.

Luke's gospel tells us that having seen him ascend into heaven, the disciples 'returned to Jerusalem with great joy' (Lk 24:52). How could that be? They had already experienced the reality of his words. We too will be full of joy if we truly believe in Jesus' promise:

'And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

These words, the last spoken by Jesus to his disciples, mark the end of his life on earth and, at the same time, the start of the life of the Church where Jesus is present in many ways: in the Eucharist, in his Word, in his ministers (bishops, priests), in the poor, in the little ones, in the marginalized... in all neighbours.

Perhaps we could emphasize a specific presence of Jesus, the one that he himself, again in Matthew's Gospel, pointed out to us: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Mt. 18:20). Through this presence he wants to be able to remain in every place.

If we live what Jesus commands, especially his New Commandment, we can experience this presence of his even outside of our place of worship, in the midst of people, in the places they live, everywhere.

What is asked of us is love that is mutual, that serves, that understands, that shares in the sufferings, anxieties and joys of our brothers and sisters – that love which covers over everything, forgives all things, typical of Christianity.

Let's live like this so that everyone may have the chance to meet Him already here on earth.

Chiara Lubich