

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC PARISHES OF



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22 May 2020

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

Dear Parishioners,

The Gospel chosen for the Ascension uses these last words of St. Matthew's Gospel, and they are a promise of Christ's presence even in his absence; concretely, on the Feast of Pentecost, next Sunday, God's triune presence is completed, so to speak, with the gift of the Holy Spirit. But even at the Ascension, Christ remains present among his disciples through the sacraments, and it is significant that the command to go out to all nations and baptise them is joined in St. Matthew's Gospel with the Ascension of Our Lord, the return of Jesus to sit at the right hand of God the Father. To sit at the right hand is literary shorthand to indicate a unity and identity of divine power and presence.

In this time of pandemic, we use the power of technology to be present: TV, Skype, Zoom, Facetime. They are all at the service of facilitating a presence of family, grandchildren, friends and colleagues in a time when we cannot be physically present.

Jesus doesn't use Zoom or Skype. He uses the sacraments to be near to us. He uses the sacraments to bring his saving power and mercy to us. The sacraments are only sacraments insofar as they reveal through signs and words the hidden presence of Christ that remains amongst us after his Ascension.

We used to write letters to be present to loved ones living far from us. The gesture of the handwriting alone could speak to us. I remember, while studying overseas long before the internet and Skype, getting letters from my mom and dad. I could "see" my parents in their hand-written script and in the phrases that said so little but conveyed so much, because they were phrases that I could hear them speaking in my head even as I read them with my eyes. I held on to those letters. Sometimes they would send a token item from home that would fit into the envelope, and bring "home" to me in my "away-from-home". They were gestures of "presence."

In this time, when access to the sacraments has been so restricted, it is perhaps not without value that we feel a little of the emptiness, a little of the distance between God and us. And then—soon, we hope—when we can approach the sacraments once again, may this distance we are now experiencing help us appreciate more acutely the incredible gift of Christ in his sacraments, that draw down the power of God into our lives, and make our Saviour present among us, even until the end of the age.

Fr. Philip Creurer  
*Pastor*