

[Readings: Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47; Eph 1:17-23; Matt 28: 6-20]

The older we get, the more we lose the familiar, the safe. The old neighborhood, in which we lived and grew, especially if we lived in Detroit, is gone or unrecognizable. How many jobs have we had in our lifetime? Who among our loved ones have been taken from us by death? How do we survive after the breakup of a relationship? It's all a matter of time. It's about time.

How do we know what time it is? The clock on the wall gives us one answer. Then the moment passes, and we're obliged to look again for a new answer shortly. The deeper understanding of what time it is comes from *context* -- which is hardly written on the wall.

Context tells us whether it's the beginning, middle, or end of a relationship, for example. It tells us whether it's time to stay or to go, to listen or to speak, to agree or to object, to reap or to sow. This deeper sense of time requires our full attention, some experience, and a lot of wisdom.

There was never a one-size-fits-all approach to delivering the Gospel. Sometimes it was important to follow every letter of the law. Later that same day, an opportunity might arise where the law was an obstacle to an even greater fidelity.

Jesus realizes that now was the time to return to the Father. When the disciples asked Jesus, "Is this the right time to restore the Kingdom to Israel?" After three years with Jesus, the Apostles still thought that Jesus came to establish a political, military kingdom to topple the Romans and restore the Jewish nation. Jesus must have thought, "Father, if I don't leave now, I'm gonna KILL these people!" And listen to how Matthew accurately, painfully and yet briefly, summarizes the Ascension experience in today's Gospel: "The eleven disciples saw Jesus. They worshiped, but they doubted."

Note that this is the very last time they are going to see Jesus Christ in the flesh, and they couldn't even give Him the benefit of their total understanding and support. But are you and I any different? We come here to worship every Sunday, but do we not also come with our own doubts?

We are never truly alone. As people of faith, surely this is something that we have been taught somewhere along the line. There are times when we may feel alone, we may feel as if our family, our friends, or even our Church has abandoned us.

We might even feel like Jesus has deserted us when our prayers aren't answered in the ways we want them to be answered. The fact remains, though, that we

are never truly alone. Right before the Ascension, Jesus promises the disciples, "I will be with you always." That same promise holds firm for us today. Just as a parent would never leave a child behind, Jesus never abandons us. The following story illustrates that point.

One evening, a father who lived in a suburb of New York, said to his 10-year-old son, 'I want you to join me at my office next week. We'll take the subway and you can spend some time seeing how I spend my day. Then you'll come home by yourself so you can get acquainted with traveling by subway.' The boy was a bit apprehensive about the prospect of coming home alone but his father assured him he would be fine. What parent lets their 10-year-old kid ride alone in a New York City subway? A kid who is left "Home Alone?" AAARRRGGGHHH!!!

On the morning they left, his father explained all the details of the trip to New York and gave him a written, detailed set of instructions for returning. After boarding the train, his father showed him the maps posted in the cars which identified all the stops. He explained that when they changed trains, the next train would be waiting for their arrival. Everything went smoothly and they arrived in New York as planned. However, the young boy was still nervous and scared.

Everything went smoothly and they arrived in New York as planned. However, the young boy was still apprehensive as his father took him back to the station for the return trip home.

He had the instructions, he had his father's assurance he would do fine but he still worried. As he waved goodbye to his father and boarded the train, he immediately went to the section where the maps were located. Sure enough, all the stops were outlined. He got off at the correct station and, just as his father said, the other train was waiting on the next ramp.

He boarded it and as he again studied the map, he was relieved to see that his 'home' station was just six stops away. Now, he felt more confident.

When the train approached his station, he got up, stood in front of the exit door and when it opened he breathed a sigh of relief... he had made it. His mother was there to meet him.

He walked her, turned to look behind him, and suddenly, he saw his father leaving the train car right behind him. **His father had been with him all the time.** There had never been any need to worry. His father took his arm and said, "Son, you know I

will always be with you when you need me.” As he locked arms with his parents, a very confident, happy – and relieved! -- boy knew he was surrounded by those who love him.

Just like the dad in this story gave his son instructions to follow, and the assurance that he would be fine, so Jesus does the same for us. Our instructions from Jesus are contained in the Gospels; we need only to take the time to read them. Our assurance from Jesus comes in the words, “I will be with you always.” Do you believe? How strong is your faith?

In the meantime, the disciples – and we – are commissioned, missioned, sent to “go and make disciples.” That is the call to evangelization. We are to make disciples, to baptize and to teach, savoring and cherishing His final words to us: “Know that I am with you always, until the end of the age.”

Today is World Communications Day. This year, Our Holy Father, Pope Francis has called each one of us “communicators,” and asks “communicators” to deliver a message of hope and trust in a season of fear, anxiety and uncertainty.

This is the true answer to the question: What time is it? Now is the hour that God comes to save us. And God calls us to communicate that message to others. The departure of Christ has led to a new age, to the apostolic era in which Christ speaks now through the Church. He is still present, at every Mass. His voice resounds through His holy Word in the Bible. I heard it said that if you want to know what God’s plan is for us, read the Bible. If you want to know what God’s specific plans are for you and me, read the Bible out loud! Likewise, the departure of Christ is not permanent. Christ will come again. But today it is not only the Apostles, but also all of us disciples, who proclaim Him now. AMEN! ALLELUIA!