

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

Wow...what a beautiful thought! What a comforting thought!

**What a great thought at daybreak when the first glimmers of sunrise
begin glow in the eastern sky...**

**What a beautiful thought in the cool of the evening...when the crickets start to chirp and
the sky is turning indigo blue...**

“I am with you always, to the end of the age...”

What a wonderful, beautiful, comforting thought...

And then I listen to the news...

**Then I hear of the mudslide in Denver
and the shootings in California...**

**I hear of hundreds of teenage girls kidnapped in Liberia
and too many starving babies in Haiti...**

I hear of old folks lonely and waiting to die...

I hear of young mothers dying way to early and leaving their children behind...

I hear of human trafficking, drug peddling and nuclear proliferation...

and I sometimes think: where are you now, Jesus...

what about your promise about being with us until the end of time...

So...I begin to have my doubts...

If Jesus promised to be with us, why is all of this ugliness here?

And then, I read our Scripture story again...

and I find that I am not alone in having doubts...

**“When they saw him, they worshipped him,
but some doubted”
Really!?**

That’s something...

**the “they” in our story are the
the 11 that traveled at least 3 years with him.**

**They witnessed his greatest miracles, ate his Last Supper with him
visited with him in the upper room after the Resurrection,
received the Holy Spirit from...**

These 11 men saw him, worshipped him and they doubted.

**And I ask myself.... if these 11 intimate companions, these 11 Apostles doubted ...
then really, why have I been so impatient with my own doubts?**

**So as I began to ponder and pray this week’s reading this is what I thought about:
Is doubt such a horrible thing?**

**It seems that we are in good company with the 11 Apostles who doubted
when we acknowledge our doubts...**

If we have doubts, does that mean we have no faith or that we have weak faith?

Some times people are judged as having a ‘strong faith’ because they have no doubts.

They are certain about God, about God’s desires and God’s will...

They are certain about what Jesus taught and who he was...

They are certain about what is ‘right’ and what will get you into heaven...

and they are also certain about what is ‘wrong’ and what will earn you some space in hell.

**Their certainty does not require any faith, though, because they ‘know’ what they
need to ‘know’.**

They have knowledge...and therefore they don’t need faith.

Does that make sense?

So what then is faith?

The ancients understood faith as ‘trusting’ what one did not understand.

So, when we talk about God, faith is trusting God even in the face of doubt...

**faith is the willingness to recognize and admit our doubts, our uncertainties,
our lack of understanding all the whys and the wherefores...**

**Faith is the intentional decision to say “yes” to a relationship
and to trust in God’s Goodness, Compassion and Mercy
even as one hears of the injustice and pain of the world...**

Doubts...doubting... our struggling to understand

even when we will never understand,

our being upset with the pain that we experience

and for the injustice that we witness

are not automatically obstacles for our faith...

rather all of our struggles are the precise opportunities for our faith to grow.

**But, I will grant you, we need to be with our doubts in such a way that allows for a certain
openness to the grace and presence of God...**

You know, some people hold so solidly, so assuredly, so certainly to their doubts,

they are just like the folks who hold so solidly, so assuredly, so certainly to their ‘faith’

**That neither group leaves any room whatsoever, or has any need whatsoever
for faith.... or for God.**

so, we need to hold our doubts and ourselves lightly...

We need to doubt our doubts.

So it is not so much a question of whether doubts are good or bad, right or wrong...

the essential question, perhaps is our openness...

our openness to the Spirit of Christ present in our lives.

our openness to the Power and the Grace of the Holy One in all of life's circumstances.

If we remained open...and willing to be surprised by Grace,

we wouldn't set pre-determined conditions that would offer us evidence for the presence, or lack there of, of God's presence.

If we remained open and willing to be surprised by Grace,

we just might find ourselves stronger than what we thought possible,

kinder than we ever imagined

more compassionate than we had ever dreamed.

You see...I believe that all human persons, made in the image and likeness of God

all human persons are essentially Holy and Divine and Good.

All human persons have a soul which is that Divine Seed

and which needs nurturing to grow and flourish...

I believe that all human persons get lost in selfishness, small minded thinking and small hearted loving to a whole variety of degrees...

I believe that it is not the certainty of our beliefs, no matter what they are, but the humility of our thoughts that lead to our greatest strength.

A long time ago, Jesus tried to put to rest the idea that if you were good,

God would send good things to you...

and if you were bad, you would experience hardship and failure.

A long time ago, Jesus tried to help us understand that God sends rain upon the just and the unjust...the sun shines on the good and the bad...

God loves and shows no impartiality...

So when Jesus said: “I will be with you always, to the end of the age” it didn’t mean the end of trials and tribulations, sufferings and hardships...

What I have come to understand him to mean:

is that in this fragile world that if we are open to His spirit, His grace: we will find strength and peace and joy and compassion to get us through all the situations of life on Earth.

When we are willing to be open to the Spirit...we will find the Spirit blowing through our lives in ways that could have never imagined....

When we hold our beliefs and our doubts lightly,

we will find something Good and beautiful and true holding us....

and that is not just a beautiful thought, but an empowering reality!

and for that we will only be able to whisper: Thank you. Amen....