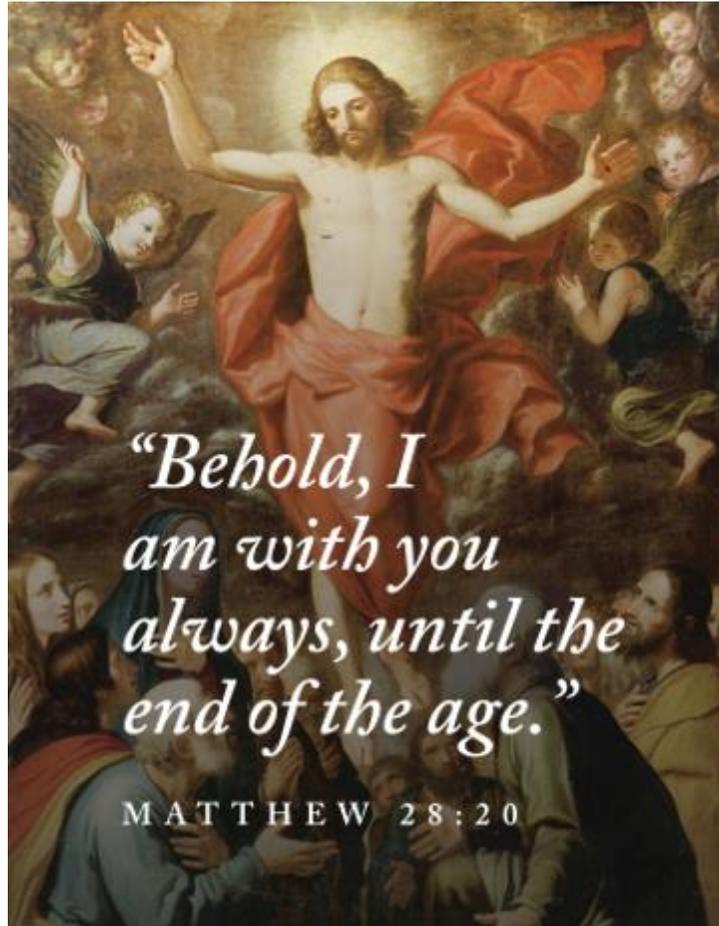


BE NOT *Afráid*

When battered by life's storms, or immersed in a dense fog of suffering and uncertainty, we may feel alone and unequipped to handle the circumstances. Yet with words that echo through thousands of years into the corners of our hearts, the Lord says to us, "Do not fear: I am with you" (Isaiah 41:10).

He speaks these words not as one who merely observes our pain, but as one who experienced immense suffering. And the very wounds that bear witness to his suffering indicate the essence of our identity and worth: we are loved by God.

Reflecting on the healed wounds of the Risen Christ, we see that even our most difficult trials can be the place where God manifests his victory. He makes all things beautiful. He makes all things new.



He is *always* with us. Jesus promised this when he gave the disciples the same mission he gives to each of us: Go.

Go be my hands and feet to a world enslaved by fear. Go to the woman who is unexpectedly pregnant and fears the future. Go to your friend who fears reprisal at work because he takes a stand for the protection of human life. Go to your aging parent in failing health who fears being a burden. And go to others, too, for their support.

We don't need to have everything figured out. We can simply follow the guidance of Our Blessed Mother, the first disciple: "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5).

Walk with each other. Do not be afraid to embrace God's gift of life. Whatever storms or trials we face, we are not alone. He is with us.

RESPECT LIFE

Art: Giovanni Bernardino Azzolino, *The Ascension*, early 17th century. Courtesy of Restored Traditions. Used with permission. NABRE © 2010 CCD. Used with permission. Copyright © 2017, USCCB, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved.