

FR ALAN'S REFLECTION

FOLLOWING IN HOPE

In the Old Western Movies, we see the wagon trains moving west along the prairie. As part of these scenes there is always the scout who goes on ahead and having reconnoitered the territory comes back to lead the wagon train forward to safety. Today on this Feast of the Ascension we remember that the Ascension is the transfiguration of the earth by heaven. Jesus has gone on ahead of us to prepare us for the age to come. We are reminded of this in our opening prayer today where it says "...where the Head has gone before in glory the Body is called to follow in hope.

The movie "ET" was made in 1982. It tells the story of Elliot, a ten-year boy who befriends ET, an alien from another world. The end of the movie shows ET preparing to return home. As part of his farewell, ET points to Elliot's heart and says, 'I will be right here.' There are two bookends to Matthew's Gospel. At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel Joseph was told to take Mary home as his wife. She was going to bear a Son who would be called Emmanuel which means "God is with us." At the end of Matthew's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples 'I am with you until the end of time' (Mt: 28:20). This is the way Matthew's Gospel communicates that God is with us. This is who Jesus is. The reason for us to follow in hope is that Jesus is with us wherever we go.

The Liturgy of the Word this Sunday reminds us that we come from the Father and we go back to the Father. The present age we now live in is a prelude of the age to come. Following in hope is choosing to become a disciple of Jesus. Then having made that decision, invite others to join us. The command that Jesus made to his disciples he also makes to us 'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Mt: 28:19).'

In the "Our Father" we pray the words "thy kingdom come." In other words, we pray that the earth will be transfigured by heaven. There was never a sequel made to the movie ET. Will there be a sequel to the life, death, resurrection and ascension into heaven of Jesus Christ in our lives? That really depends on us and whether we want to play our part in transfiguring the earth. Do we truly believe that Jesus is present with us and is the one who will lead us to the safety of his kingdom? Will we act on that belief and choose to follow in hope? As disciples of Jesus will we bold enough to invite others to join us?