



Scripture nugget – God’s abiding Presence calms all fears

Do not fear: I am with you; do not be anxious: I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with My victorious right hand (Isaiah 41:10).

God promises to be with us always. This is the important promise of Jesus to His disciples before He ascended into heaven. ***And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*** It is an important promise because we have His personal assurance that we are never alone to grapple with our problems. Though we know God is omnipresent, it is very reassuring to hear it personally from the mouth of our Lord Himself. God’s abiding Presence is in us, and all around us. If we make an attempt daily to live in His holy Presence, we can make great progress in our growth in personal holiness and overcome pride and temptation. *Where can I go from Your Spirit? From Your Presence, where can I flee? If I ascend to the heavens, You are there; if I lie down in Sheol, there You are (Psalm 139:7-8).* Thus, St Paul says: *For “In Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).* God assures us that even if a mother should forget her baby at her breast, He will not forget us! (cf. Isaiah 49:15). With God’s Presence in us and around us, what do we have to fear? Unholy fear is instigated by the Evil One and reflects our lack of faith and trust in God.

God is present in a special way for those who are persecuted for His sake. When God is present in a special way with His attendant graces, human behaviour takes on a supernatural dimension. We see this manifested by the Christian martyrs, none of whom died terrified but at profound peace. St Stephen, the first martyr of the Church, was unjustly persecuted by the Jewish Council but his face had the calmness and beauty of an angel (cf. Acts 6:15). Even as he was being persecuted, Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit could see heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God! (cf. Acts 7:55-56). Just before breathing his last, Stephen was strong enough to beg forgiveness for the sins of his murderers (cf. Acts 7:60). In times of tribulation and adversity, remembering and living in the abiding Presence of God can make the difference between giving up and persevering in faith. For those who try their best to do God’s will, this promise of God’s Presence is even stronger. Jesus said: *The One Who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to Him (John 8:29).* When God is on our side, what does it matter who is against us? (cf. Romans 8:31). The Lord will fight the battle for us (cf. Exodus 14:14).

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You are in me, and all around me. I am carved on the Palms of Your Hands (cf. Isaiah 49:16). This knowledge is too wonderful for me! Give me the grace to recall Your Presence always so that my life can be peaceful and free from useless fears and anxieties. What need I fear when You are near? Are You not in control of everything? Are You not the Lord of all (cf. Romans 14:9)? If I live in Your abiding Presence, I will make rapid progress in growth in personal holiness. The grace of abiding in Your loving Presence will help me see You in others, curb my pride and ego, be more sensitive to the plight of others and enable me to love others more. By frequent participation in Mass and Sacraments, constant pondering on Your Word, meditation on Your Passion and frequent, silent evocations of Your praise, help me to live in Your Presence. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus.