

Joseph Wood, OFM Conv.  
Dover Beach Mass Homily  
10 September 2024  
England, 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

*Last Chapter of Matthew's Resurrection Narrative.....*

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I am Br. Joseph Wood.  
I am an American by passport,  
but I am a Franciscan, and therefore we are equals to each other,  
no matter our nationality or community alliance.

We are one in Christ, and in his beloved followers, Francis and Clare.

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The scripture we just heard was the last chapter of the Resurrection narrative  
in the Gospel of Matthew.

It is known as the "**Great Commissioning**,"  
the command for Jesus' disciples to go into all the world  
...to baptize, to preach... and to basically make the world as better place.

The mountain where Jesus asked his disciples to meet him,  
is believed to have been the mountain of the Transfiguration, Mount Tabor  
... where St. Peter famously said, "**It is good to be here!**"

And it is good to be here and to remember.  
To remember our shared past.

This anniversary is a time to praise our common past glories,  
with the remembrance of so many courageous friars who travelled the seas  
and who landed on these shores... 800 years ago... today!  
It was a humble beginning for *so much...good*

And through the centuries, male and female, religious and lay...  
have done great things in the name of Christ, in the spirit of Francis and Clare.

years of offering charity and building charitable institutions,  
years of teaching, and building academic institutions,  
years of healing and building medical institutions,  
years of diplomatic interventions, and building international relationships  
\*\* So much charity and service in so many ways.

and there have been years of struggle too,  
years of suppression, of torture, of exile, of executions...  
*and in our modern era, even fewer and fewer vocations.*

And just as the apostles wanted to remain in Christ's glory  
to remain in the peace and comfort of being in the Lord's presence

during his transfiguration and his resurrection appearances,  
we are called *not to remain* in our securities,  
in our securities of the past,  
but to go forth... and to keep going forth,  
and to keep doing good,  
and to keep struggling into our sometimes precarious future.

Christ told us today in the Gospel, *I am with you always, even until the end of time.*

That should be so comforting for us... probably the most beautiful words in the scriptures.  
God is with us, not above us, not distant from us...  
**with us**, in our good times and in our confusions.

And even though St. Augustine said it, we Franciscans too, "*are ever ancient and ever new*"!  
Some of us are young with vigor,  
Some of us are grey-haired... but still young with vigor

As some of our communities grow, others are diminishing... It is the cycle of life.  
It *is* something to be sad about and to mourn for a *little while*.  
But *nothing that should cause us despair*.

**\*\* *I am with you always, even until the end of time.***

Today, in this 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, we may rejoice,  
because unlike the past... today... nowadays...  
we are stronger because we are working together.

We *should no longer be* – lone communities, doing good,  
but rather, one large vigorous Franciscan community, still doing good.

Still trying to bring about a better world than the one we found.

*It is good to be here.*

*It is good to remember.*

*It is good to keep going forward*

*I am with you always*, Christ said, *I make all things new.*

And his beloved followers, Francis and Clare, share that same sentiment,  
*"I have done what was mine to do, now you must do what is yours...  
...again...and again...and again..."*

***Blessings to us all!***