

A friend of mine has a son who's graduating from high school this week. The last few years have been a struggle for her. She said, "I raised such a nice boy, and then he became a teenager." But last week she got a card from him. It said, "Mom, you did a great job bringing me up." The message continued inside: "But I gave it a hell of a fight, didn't I?" She told me people have said recently how much her son has changed for the better. She said, "He hasn't really changed lately; he's been becoming again the boy he used to be." I said, "I haven't really known your son these last few years." She said, "Believe me, you haven't missed much."

Sometimes people go away from us. And teens will say this about parents as much as parents say it about teens. A relationship that used to be good suddenly goes on hold. There are many occasions that make us think people are going away. A friend of yours announces they're engaged to somebody. Someone you love takes a job out of town or joins the armed services. Or, more dramatically, someone in the family dies. And suddenly we think, "Oh, what do I do now? What will restore this relationship?"

Jesus senses this feeling when he dines at the Last Supper. This ominous meal warns the Apostles that their master is going away. When we hear this passage today, on the Sunday before Ascension Thursday, we know the Apostles will grieve again when the risen Jesus ascends into the heavens. He is going away from us.

Jesus decides to comfort their fear. He tells them he will ask the Father to send them another Paraclete, one who will be with them always. This is incredible news. Just as they are about to face this loss, he promises them they'll never face it again.

Usually, grief lessens with time. We come to know that the person who has gone away, has also left something behind. They've changed us; they've made us stronger somehow.

Jesus models for us the responsibility we have in relationships. Most of us fall into good relationships gladly because we enjoy them and they give us life. But many times we need to stop, we may need to go away, to leave the relationship behind. People will wonder, "What do we do now? What will restore us?" Perhaps, like Jesus, we can help them. Perhaps, like Jesus, we can pray for them, we can tell them we care, we can leave them a memory. If our going away causes someone grief, it may still communicate our love.

Even when Jesus seems distant to us, he has left us the Holy Spirit, and even when we go away from another, we can still leave behind our love.

*"Going away" takes many forms: Anger, death, departure. Or just discovering a child has become Bart Simpson
inmate. In whatever form it takes;*