

**August 2023**

***Reflection***

**A Prayer and a Promise**

“The Lord be with you” echoes throughout the Mass. The phrase may serve as the priest’s first greeting. The deacon or priest uses it to introduce the Gospel. The priest opens the eucharistic prayer with it. He repeats it before the final blessing.

“The Lord is with you” is how the angel of the Lord greeted Gideon. The angel Gabriel used the same greeting at his annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:28). Not “The Lord *be* with you,” but “The Lord *is* with you.” Gabriel expanded the greeting by calling Mary “full of grace.” The angel of the Lord called Gideon “champion.”

Mary had questions, but Gideon actually thought the angel was mistaken. The Lord was with his ancestors, performing wonders for them. But “If the Lord is with us, why has all this [misfortune] happened to us?”

Unfazed by Gideon’s fixation on the past and the present, the angel revised the greeting’s tense: “I shall be with you.” Gideon prepared the angel a sacrifice of meat and cakes. Fire consumed them. The angel disappeared. Only then did Gideon realize the Lord was indeed with him. He had seen the angel of the Lord face-to-face.

The Lord’s presence rings out multiple times at every Mass, and not only with the words “The Lord be with you.” Yet multiple times every day we may think that the priest was mistaken: “If the Lord is with us, why do we experience misfortune?”

The Lord was, is, and will be with us. When we make our sacrifice, God reveals his face.

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