

What is perhaps the most poignant word in the English language?

Would it not be "GOODBYE?"

Think of the doughboys of World War I hanging out of the train windows waving goodbye to their loved ones...and on their way to the muddy trenches of France, so many of them never to return.

And think of all the soldiers before and after. War is the consummate creator of "goodbyes."

"Goodbye" comes in many different packages: a mother waving "goodbye" as her little tyke leaves home for the first time on the way to kindergarten, the goodbyes said at deathbeds.

When Saint Columba in the 6th century was about to die, his beloved white horse said "goodbye" by putting his head on the monk's shoulder and filled his cowl with tears.

The goodbyes of workers losing their jobs, of an unwed mother giving a child to adoption, of family members moving away to take a job far from home.

Each "Goodbye!" has its own flavor, but do they not all share a poignancy?

And what does "Goodbye" really mean? Of course, it is the shortened form of:

**"GOD BE WITH YOU!"**

In the Gospel today, recounting the after Easter events it has come time for Jesus to say "Goodbye."

And it was for such a short time that they had come to share the companionship of Jesus: just three years, a year shorter than the usual high school span. And they had so much yet to learn. What were they to do without him?

So today Jesus gives them and us a promise: "I will not leave you orphans."

"I will ask the Father and he will give you another Advocate: to be with you always:the Spirit of truth....he will be with you and he will be in you."

So what the apostles thought was to be "Goodbye" was not...for them nor for us.

What the "Goodbye of Jesus means is:

***"God is with you!"***

And that is a message we are to share: "God is with you." Each Wednesday, the neighbors and I go over to the bar for a Happy Hour followed by a bowl of soup. For several months a mystery man clad in black, with a black cowboy hat, would sit by himself at the bar. He never joined anyone else in conversation except the bartender.

Rumor had it that his wife had communicated suicide. He was always alone. And then for the last month we never saw him at this usual place. So I asked the waitress, "What happened to the mysterious man dressed in black?"

And she whispered back: "Didn't you know? He committed suicide."

No, I didn't know. Nor my companions.

We never had the chance to say "Goodbye!"

But more poignantly we never took the effort, nor the time to say to him in any way:

***"God is with you."***