

29 Sixth Sunday of Easter

Year A

May 21, 2017

Acts 8:5-8,14-17

Psalm 66

1Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

In today's Gospel, we find a deeply personal moment is recorded when Jesus speaks in the privacy of the Upper Room where He is celebrating the Last Supper with His closest friends. Jesus' conversation centres on His personal life as He speaks of God, His Father. Jesus tells the Apostles that when He departs He will not leave them alone and on their own but will send them His Spirit.

Jesus promises to send the Advocate, "*the Spirit of truth,*" to help His Apostles, including us, to carry on His mission of bringing the Gospel to the world. Jesus knows that the work and mission He will entrust to His Church will not be easy. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus will always be present to His followers, guiding them in the way of truth and helping them to grow in their faith.

Jesus is preparing the Apostles for Pentecost when the breath of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire will transform them into fearless Apostles entrusted with a mission of spreading the Gospel and the Good News of Jesus Christ, and of building Christ's Church. Prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, you recall, the Apostles huddled together in fear in the Upper Room. That all changed at Pentecost, when they received the Holy Spirit.

From this tiny band of Apostles, the Church will spread from Jerusalem throughout Judea and Samaria and even to the ends of the earth. The power of the Holy Spirit accomplishes the growth of the Church and the spreading of the Gospel. That is why Jesus made a solemn promise: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always. This is the Spirit of truth."

The Advocate, also known as the Paraclete, is the Holy Spirit, the Third Divine Person of the Blessed Trinity, along with Jesus and God, the Father. The Holy Spirit is active in the Old Testament in the creation of the world when the "Spirit breathed over the waters" (Genesis 1:1) and when speaking through the prophets.

In the New Testament, the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus, at His baptism by John the Baptist, is the sign that this is He who is to come, the Messiah, the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is sent by God the Father and by Jesus to guide the Church until

the end of time. The Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself but speaks through the Scriptures which He inspired.

For us today, the Sacrament of Confirmation passes on the grace of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, the anointing with blessed chrism oil, and the saying of the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Our Catholic faith tells us the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. Through the Sacrament of Confirmation we are sealed and strengthened in Holy Spirit so that these gifts may be more fully manifest and present in our lives.

Confirmation perfects or completes the grace of our Baptism through the action of the Holy Spirit. Each time we celebrate our Sunday Liturgy, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest calls upon the Holy Spirit to bless the gifts of bread and wine, that they may be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. After the memorial offering the priest says to the Father, "May all of us who share in the Body and Blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit."

The unity of the Church through the Holy Eucharist is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who brings the faithful into communion with Christ to form His Body, the Catholic Church. When we pray, when we read the Scriptures, and when we do good works, the Spirit is at work in us, guiding, enlightening, sanctifying, and inspiring us in the ways of God.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our own lives today is a reason for us to have hope. Jesus did not leave the Apostles to struggle without the help of His Spirit and He will not leave us on our own either. We have His Word for this. The Holy Spirit loves and cares for us and is our strength and encouragement in times of trial, just as much as He was for the Apostles.

In the Holy Spirit we have a helper and comforter who makes Jesus present to every person in their individual situation. We need the Holy Spirit in our lives so we can live according to the teachings of Jesus. The Holy Spirit guides us to the truth so we may live as more faithful disciples of Jesus.

In today's Gospel message, we find great hope in the promise of the Holy Spirit. The message is filled with the action verb, *will*. Jesus repeatedly uses this verb

throughout His instructions to the Apostles. Jesus says, “And I *will* ask the Father, and He *will* give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The Spirit *will* be in you. We couldn’t ask for any more assurance of Jesus’ promise to us than is found in these words.

Jesus knows there are many difficulties and uncertainties that we face each day in our complicated and unsettled world. We are in need of someone to help bring peace and truth to our lives. Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit can be that *Someone*. Jesus brought us salvation and life, and has sent us the Advocate so we will never be alone. Jesus, who loves us, sent the Holy Spirit to guide and protect us at all times, but especially in those times when we most feel lost and alone. Let us never lose sight of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives.

The Holy Spirit is already within us, ready to transform us. The Holy Spirit is constantly encouraging us to spend time in prayer, to receive the Sacraments, to repent of our sins, and to reach out in love to our brothers and sisters. We thank God for the gifts of the Holy Spirit that work in countless hidden ways to deepen our faith, fill us with strength and encouragement, and renew our lives.

As we begin this sixth week of Easter, let us pray that the Holy Spirit *will* open our hearts to whatever *will* help us to grow in the Lord. May we always be open and receptive to the Holy Spirit in our lives. How do you think the Holy Spirit *will* come into your life? What might you do to invite the Spirit to be part of your life each day? Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of Your love.