

Sixth Sunday of Easter - C

In today's Gospel, Jesus is talking with the disciples on the night before his death. This is his going-away conversation. Whatever he wants to say, has to be said now.

Saying good-bye can be difficult. There are occasions when everyone is at peace, and that makes saying good-bye easier. But more times than not, we feel unprepared to say good-bye, especially when the leave-taking is definitive.

At the Last Supper, John presents Jesus as fully aware of what was about to happen, and fully accepting of it. He is at peace with regard to his personal destiny.

But he knows that his disciples both feel unprepared and are unprepared to take up the mission he has begun. He can see in their faces the fear and anxiety of not having him with them.

That is a reality that cannot be passed over in silence. It must be addressed. Jesus cannot leave anything unspoken. He must give his disciples what they need to move forward into the future.

And he speaks of "the Advocate," the one who will present to them in Jesus' absence, the one who will lead them into the fullness of truth.

The Advocate, another name for the Holy Spirit, will bring into clarity all that they have experienced together and all that Jesus has taught them.

The disciples will indeed mourn Jesus' passing, and what's more they will be tempted to flee from the mission he has left for them. But because of his promise and how he fulfills it, they will find new life in the message he has given them. The Spirit will grow in them.

We are in that space today. True, we often speak of the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, and in the Word of God we hear each Sunday, as well as in the assembly of the faithful and the person of the priest.

But it's not wrong to recognize also, that we feel the absence of Jesus, too. We read the Scriptures and see how present he was to those in need and how uncanny and full of meaning, and to the point his teaching was.

And when we are face with the dilemmas of modern life we can long for the clarity that the disciples seemed to receive. "If I could just ask Jesus this one question and get an answer for what's troubling me!"

Too often we go to bed with the question and we wake up with it still unanswered.

What does Jesus have to say to that?

One thing he doesn't say is that he will send the Holy Spirit to help his disciples get things started, and then they will be on their own.

Sixth Sunday of Easter - C

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a permanent gift—with no expiration date but effective “even unto the end of the age.”

I’ve always felt that it’s unfortunate that Pentecost comes at the end of the Easter season, and then, the next day we are back in “ordinary time.”

That process just doesn’t seem to do justice to the reality of God’s gift of the Holy Spirit.

Lately I’ve come to realize that, as far as the Church’s year goes, the celebration of Pentecost starts already now—as we continue to move through the season of celebrating Christ’s resurrection and victory over death, we are pulled into the new reality that we have been created anew.

What God had intended from all eternity has finally come to pass: Not only has his Son proven himself victor over death, but he has made it possible for us who believe to become fully human, fully realized.

Where once there was a gap in our hearts that only God could fill, now that gap has been occupied by the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of the Father.

In the face of a felt absence we are invited to trust that the Spirit’s presence will suffice. We have what we need to make the journey forward.

We have not been left orphaned.

These days approaching the celebration of Pentecost are an invitation for us to look within. Rather than project outward our images of what we want our relationship with Jesus to be like, we are called to cultivate a sense of interiority, which will be open to discovering God’s presence as having been there all along.

What will the Spirit say to us, once we have turned to him in our hearts? Jesus’ first words to the disciples after the resurrection were “Peace. My peace I leave with you.”

The Spirit speaks those words again and shows us where our peace lies in the lives we are living right here and now.

The gift of the Spirit made it possible for the disciples to carry on the mission of Jesus. The Spirit is still empowering us to do the same.

And the results of the mission will be the same as well—good news and fullness of life with God in his kingdom for all who venture to believe.