

## EASTER SUNDAY VI “A”

MAY 17, 2020

As Easter marches on we continue to fill in the meaning of the resurrection. Good Friday is a point of demarcation. The cross puts an end to the earthly life of Jesus. However, that's not the end of the story. Jesus' death doesn't end the relationship established between Jesus and the disciples prior to Good Friday. According to John, Jesus will continue to be with them forever. The means by which Jesus will continue to be with them is by way of the Advocate—the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they need not worry about being left orphaned as I mentioned last Sunday. This occurs when the risen and glorified Jesus breathes the Spirit upon them in his appearance to them on Easter Sunday evening as they huddle fearfully behind locked doors in the upper room in Jerusalem. (Jn. 20:21-23). Though today's Gospel selection occurs in John's account as part of Jesus' final teaching following the Last Supper, the liturgy employs it as we journey to the conclusion of the Easter celebration in the feasts of the Ascension and Pentecost.

Jesus knows that his disciples are feeling anxious. It is a normal reaction when uncertainty is in the air. We, too, know this feeling as we experience personal, family, parish and community journeys through these weeks of social distancing, work stoppage, closed businesses, shortages of food and household products, and, most terrifying of all, fear of being overtaken by an unseen and potentially deadly virus.

In his discourse, Jesus makes it clear that his days physically on earth are numbered, the time of his departure is at hand. Jesus makes every effort to prepare the disciples, affirming them, so they will be ready. Jesus wants them to understand that he is not abandoning them. He is not going to leave them orphaned. He promises them the Holy Spirit, known in John's Gospel as the Advocate or Comforter, in Greek the (*parakaletos*) who will come to their assistance.

Two television commercials that I view frequently come to mind. One of them states: ***Need help. Get Hope.*** Another states the individual portrayed ***takes the time to get to know you, listen to your concerns, fight for you.*** Both of these advertisements are for legal firms, yet do provide insight into the person and work of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit empowers members of the body of Christ to serve and care for their neighbor who is in need of help. As comforter the Spirit comes alongside us, bringing hope to the hopeless and comfort to the grieving and suffering in our midst. As advocate, w the Spirit gives witness to Jesus, putting forward his case to humanity especially for those who, as Pope Francis continually reminds us, live on the periferies—the poor, the unborn, the abandoned elderly, prisoners, the homeless, the immigrant and refugee, those persecuted for their faith.

During these days, we witness ample examples of the presence of Jesus with us through the Spirit: health care workers--doctors, nurses, first responders on the front lines of hospitals receiving and treating the sick entrusted to them. Daily news reports show people organizing contributing to and distributing food to unemployed and homeless people. We witness transportation workers and workers in the manufacturing sector and food distribution services keeping needed supplies available to us.

Our St. Cecilia community, well known for its social outreach and volunteerism also is a visible sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit among us. Volunteers have sown cloth masks and have offered them freely to those needing them to help curb the spread of COVID19. Many people both in and out of the parish have contributed finances generously to the special fund to help our immigrant brothers and sisters meet financial needs since many of them do not qualify for government aid. Our parish's Knights of Columbus Council, and others, collect, package and make available food for the immigrants among us. Through our Social Justice Committee, the monthly "Black Bag Collection", the monthly food collection we continue our pre-pandemic commitment to service as advocates and comforters to our brothers and sisters in their need.

In our prayer for each other, in reaching out to family and friends to check on them or just to offer a friendly hello or a listening ear.

In our gathering for Eucharist, even if for now only by means of electronic transmission until we can do so physically again, the Word is spoken, the Bread is broken, the Cup poured and shared.

My friends, Jesus has not left us orphaned. We need just to look and hear with the eyes and ears of faith. Jesus is alive and with us!

17 May, 2020  
Father Jim Secora