

**6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER; Cycle – A; May 14<sup>th</sup> 2023**  
**Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17; 1Peter 3: 15-18; John 14: 15-21**

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Today's gospel is the continuation of the farewell discourse of Jesus to his Apostles which took place at the Last Supper. Only in this discourse Jesus speaks extensively about his undivided unity with the Father and also he gives the detailed account of the Holy Spirit. *If we want to know about the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit, the only source we need to look into is John's farewell discourse.* According to John's gospel the public teaching of Jesus ends in chapter 12 and thereafter he is teaching or coaching his disciples privately. Jesus' long instruction to the Apostles begins in chapter 13 with Last Supper and ends in chapter 17. In chapter 18 through 21 John writes about the arrest, death and resurrection of Jesus. In this farewell discourse Jesus gives his Apostles the clear indication as what the future course of action should be and how they would be able to achieve the task with the help of the **Holy Spirit**. In this discourse our Lord promised his Church, through the Apostles, that the Holy Spirit would be with the Church until the end of time. The Spirit of truth will be directing the Church and effectively aiding it to preserve the faith, the doctrine, and the morals which Christ taught his Apostles. **Jesus says, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always."** This saying shows that Jesus was their Advocate so far and he would be sending the Holy Spirit as 'another Advocate.'

We all need the help of an attorney or advocate especially when we are caught up in legal problems. A good attorney will instruct, guide and encourage his client and will find means and ways to save him/her from the trouble. This advocate is not of something of human origin, rather he is the Paraclete or the Holy Spirit." From the Acts of the Apostles we come to know, how active and helpful the Holy Spirit was in the missionary activities of the early Church. *The Holy Spirit was an attorney, counselor and comforter for the Apostles and early Christians when they were dragged before the unjust authorities and being persecuted by the Roman Emperors.* We see the Holy Spirit even freeing the Apostles from prison. **In Mark 13: 11 Jesus speaks about the power of the Holy Spirit as their attorney. He says, "When they lead you away and hand you over, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. But say whatever is given to you at that hour. For, it will not be you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit."**

At the same time the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to the Apostles was with a pre-condition. Jesus says, **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate with you always."** In other words, the Apostles could not take the gift of the Holy Spirit for granted. Only when they

would love Jesus and observe his commandments they could expect the Holy Spirit to be with them. Again Jesus says in the same passage with emphasis, **“Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.”** So the observance of the commandments is the reflection of one’s love for Jesus. **Jesus continues, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him.” (Jn. 14: 23).**

During the severe Roman persecution the first three centuries the Christians remained faithful to the teachings of Jesus and as such the Father and the Holy Spirit always dwelt in the Church. But in course of time as Church gained religious freedom the greed for political power and material gains corrupted the leaders of the Church. As a result the Holy Spirit was pushed out. For many centuries the faithful didn’t hear much about the Holy Spirit at all. The same tendency continues today. We know why the presence of the Holy Spirit is absent in many religious leaders, individuals and families today. These days majority of Christians are not ready to keep up the commandments of Jesus and the leaders don’t give them good teachings; as a result the Holy Spirit is absent in them. **In other words, where there is no dwelling of the Father and the Son, there is no Holy Spirit either.** Then our life boat will be tossed in the rough sea without a captain. In this modern age the faithful are also worried about the drop of Mass attendance in the churches and lack of faith in people; they are upset over the scandals of the religious leaders. They wonder what the future of the Church will be. Today the percentage of the believers is very small. But if we, the faithful, try we can keep the Holy Spirit alive with us and in the Church. Our fidelity and love for the commandments of Jesus will be enough to keep the Church active.