

The Sixth Sunday of Easter, Year A, 2008

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Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.” The Gospel today is a Gospel of assurance. It is also a Gospel that prepares us for the Ascension, which is Thursday, May 1st. The Ascension marks the beginning of an era that is still with us, an era in which we live with the Christ of faith, enabled and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The earthly ministry of the man, Jesus, ended with the Ascension, and he is present with us now in faith.

Our Lord’s disciples must have been somewhat anxious, in the hours before the Ascension, as he prepared them for this transition. “In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.” I’ve intentionally reversed the order of the text, here, for continuity, but the point is the reassurance. “I will be with you, always, and in my love for you, I will make myself known.”

We who follow Jesus, who obey his commandments and do his work, do so because we love him. In the love that we share, this magnificent *agape* love, Christ is present and makes his presence known through us. In the community of the faithful, Jesus is in the midst of us. We feel his presence; we are warmed by his touch, so much that it is almost tangible. And what is this presence, how can we describe it? The presence is the promised Advocate, the Holy Spirit, given us by God so that we can continue the work of Jesus Christ.

Through the Holy Spirit, we become the corporal extension of the Risen Lord. We become the voice of the Savior; God’s Word is incarnate in us. Our hands are his hands, our eyes his eyes, our feet his feet. The Holy Spirit enables us to do the work of Christ in this world, to be witness to his glory, to bring his love to those in need of comfort. God’s grace finds expression through our good works. In love, in obedience to Christ’s commandments, we are doing what we promised in our baptism: to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

We worry that we are inadequate, that we don’t know enough, that we aren’t skilled enough, that we will drop the ball, even do more harm than good. But, this worry is meritless, because the Holy Spirit equips us to do that which Jesus asks us to do. We are not perfect, but we are good enough. The Church is not perfect by any means, but it is adequate to do the work that Christ has given it to do. And it is through the Church, made of God’s baptized family, disciples like you and me, that the reality of Easter, the reality of the Resurrection lives on. Jesus lives in the hearts of the faithful and makes himself known through the lives of the faithful. It is in this way that the Church can be called the Body of Christ.

Our task is to be the fruit of the holy vine, to proclaim the Gospel daily, to know Jesus and make him known. If we do this, we meet the expectation of the Gospel for today; we keep our Lord’s commandments. *Amen. You can get this, and all sermons, in a form you can edit and print, by subscribing. [Click here.](#)*