

025 Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year A)

Advocates for Christ

For some Sundays now, the Gospels have been taken from Jesus' last supper discourse that we find in John's Gospel. In this discourse Jesus is preparing his disciples for the time when he will no longer be with them in a physical way. Naturally, they are confused and dismayed by Jesus' words that in a short time they will no longer see him.

But, in the passage we heard last Sunday, Jesus encourages them: 'Do not let your hearts be troubled', he said, 'trust in God still and trust in me.' What wonderful words these are for us. 'Do not be troubled! Trust in God! Trust in me!' And today's Gospel continues this message of encouragement: Jesus promises to send us the Advocate (the Spirit of Truth) to be with us forever!

In legal terms, an advocate is someone who pleads our case in court, who says the words we cannot say, who presents the arguments we cannot make ourselves.

As the divine advocate, the Holy Spirit pleads the case for Jesus by revealing the full truth about him. And the Holy Spirit does this through us who make up the Body of Christ on earth: we are the hands and feet and voice and heart of Christ in our world; by the way we love one another, we reveal to the world the truth about Jesus and the primacy of God's saving love.

Besides our actions, an important way in which we can be advocates for Christ is in sharing our personal stories of moments of grace in our life, of moments when we were helped and strengthened God's Holy Spirit. This is what the psalmist does in today's responsorial psalm. After praising God's wondrous deeds in general, he speaks of God's personal intervention in his own life. In a touching intimate moment, captured in the final verse of today's psalm, he says to the people, 'come close to me and hear, I will tell what God did for my soul.' In the verses that follow, unfortunately not included in the responsorial psalm but you can look them up in your Bible, he tells the story of how in a time of distress he prayed to God who lovingly heard his prayer.

Today it is still our personal stories rather than theological doctrines that most attract people to Christ. Have you ever told another person what God has done for your soul? Have you had the courage to share your sacred story, perhaps to tell of a moment in your life when you felt touched by God's grace in some special way?

As Christians our calling is not only to be advocates for Christ but also to be advocates for those who cannot speak for themselves—for refugees, for women and children being trafficked, for the mentally ill, the unborn and the aged, indeed all for who are unable to plead their cause. Remarkably, by advocating for them, we are advocating for Christ and his Gospel in a most eloquent way. There is no distinction between being an advocate for Christ and an advocate for the voiceless.

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