

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

(John 14:1-12)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If you love me you will keep my commandments. I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you. In a short time the world will no longer see me; but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will understand that I am in my Father and you in me and I in you. Anybody who receives my commandments and keeps them will be one who loves me; and anybody who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I shall love him and show myself to him.'

Imagine your manager — competent, calm, the kind of person who always seems to know what to do — pulls you aside on a Friday afternoon and says: *"I'm heading up to the Sunshine Coast for a fortnight. But don't worry — I've left you everything you need."* And then, with a cheerful wave, she is gone.

Monday arrives. The detailed instructions she left behind are perfectly clear for every situation except the one you are currently facing. The phones are ringing. A client wants a decision that was not in the handover notes. And somewhere in the back of your mind a quiet voice is asking: *"Did she really think this through?"*

Now — hand on heart — how many of us, in that moment, feel completely at peace?

Most of us would feel exactly what the disciples were feeling in today's Gospel: the creeping anxiety of being left alone with an enormous mission and very little confidence in their own ability to carry it out. *"What if I make the wrong call? What if they ask me something I cannot answer?"*

Jesus knows this fear. And so, on the night before His Passion, He makes a promise so remarkable that we must slow down and examine it carefully. Three things from today's Gospel deserve our full attention.

First Question: Who Exactly Is This Advocate?

Jesus says: *"I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever."* The word in Greek is *Parakletos* — literally, *one who is called alongside* — that's why we have the word Paraclete. Now, do not let the word "Advocate" pass through your ears as mere religious decoration. It is a precise legal term. An advocate is the person who stands next to you in court — not to observe, not to cheer from the gallery, but to argue your case when the stakes are highest.

The Holy Spirit is not a warm feeling that descends on people at a weekend retreat and then politely disappears by the time they hit the car park on Sunday afternoon. He is a *Person* — the

Third Person of the Most Holy Trinity — sent with a specific mission: to be with you and *in* you, permanently.

Jesus also calls Him *the Spirit of Truth*. And here is where things get interesting, because the world today is drowning in opinions but starving for Truth. Everyone has a platform. Everyone has a take. You can scroll through your phone for ten minutes over a morning flat white and collect seventeen contradictory views on the same question — and none of them will give you peace. And yet, for all this noise, the world — as Jesus Himself diagnoses it — "neither sees nor knows" the Spirit of Truth. Why? Because Truth is not a trending post. It is not the outcome of a Senate inquiry. Truth, as Jesus declared three verses earlier in this same chapter, is a *Person*: "*I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.*" The Holy Spirit's entire mission is to lead us deeper into that Person. He is not a substitute for Christ — He is the One who makes Christ present in us.

Second Question: What Is the Condition for Receiving This Gift?

Here Jesus is both tender and direct — a combination He manages better than anyone: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments.*"

Notice carefully what He is *not* saying. He is not saying: *keep the commandments so that God will tolerate you*. The commandments are not a loyalty card that you stamp enough times to eventually earn divine goodwill. No — love comes first. Obedience is love's *expression*, not its *price*.

This distinction matters enormously, because many of us have quietly inverted the order. We think: "*I will follow the rules, and perhaps eventually I will feel something.*" But that is a bit like a husband who says to his wife: "*I will remember our anniversary — just remind me three days in advance, confirm it the night before, and perhaps send a text on the morning itself.*" Is that love? Or is it compliance dressed up in a suit?

St. Augustine understood this from the inside. He wanted virtue without conversion, fruit without roots. The commandments divorced from love are a cage. But the commandments flowing from love become, as St. John says, *not burdensome* — because love makes light what is heavy.

The docility that the Holy Spirit requires, then, is not the passive compliance of someone who has simply run out of arguments. It is the active surrender of someone who has discovered that God's word is trustworthy — and has chosen, freely and joyfully, to live inside it.

Third Question: What Does "I in You" Actually Mean?

Jesus says: *"On that day you will understand that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you."* This is, perhaps, the most astonishing sentence in this entire passage. We are not merely spectators of the divine life. We are, through the Holy Spirit, *participants* in it. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit take up residence in the baptized soul. This is what the Church means by the word *grace* — not merely God's approval, but God's actual *life*, shared with us.

Which brings us to the uncomfortable question we must ask ourselves: *If the Holy Spirit truly dwells in me — why do I so often live like an orphan?*

There is a temptation here, and it sounds like this: *"She'll be right."* We are a people who pride ourselves on getting on with things, not making a fuss, handling whatever comes with a certain stoic cheerfulness. And that is, in many ways, an admirable quality. But *"she'll be right"* is not the same thing as Christian hope. *"She'll be right"* is optimism with no guarantees — an indication dressed up as courage. An orphan who learns to cope alone has not solved the problem of being an orphan. Christian hope is something entirely different: it is confidence in a promise made by Someone who cannot lie, and who proved He keeps His word by walking out of a sealed tomb on the third day.

Peter, in our second reading, gives us the remedy: *"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for the reason for your hope."*

Philip the deacon understood this. He walked into Samaria — not exactly a warm audience for a Jewish preacher — with nothing but the Gospel and the power of the Spirit. And the result was joy. Not because Philip had a communications strategy. Not because he had polished his talking points. But because he had opened himself completely to the One who works through willing instruments.

A Closing Question

So, as we draw near to Pentecost in two weeks, let each of us bring one honest question home from Mass today: *Have I truly welcomed the Holy Spirit — not as a theological category, but as a living Person who prays in me, decides in me, and speaks through me?*

The Spirit of Truth has been given to you. He is not waiting for you to be perfect. He is waiting for you to be *willing*. He is not a distant resource you access in emergencies. He is your Advocate — permanent, personal, and present.

Love Christ. Keep His word. And do not spend another week living like an orphan when you have a Father who will not abandon you, a Saviour who has conquered death, and a Spirit who dwells within you at this very moment — and who knows you not by your suburb or your postcode, but by your name.

You are not orphans. Live like it.