

## GOSPEL

JOHN 14:15-21

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 your 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.'

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today's Gospel, the continuation of that of last Sunday, takes us back to the moving and dramatic moment of Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples. John the Evangelist gathers from the lips and heart of the Lord His last teachings, before His Passion and death. Jesus promises his friends, at that sad, dark moment, that after him, they will receive "another Paraclete". This word means another "Advocate", another Defender, another Counsellor: "the Spirit of Truth"; and he adds, "I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you". These words convey the joy of a new Coming of Christ. He, Risen and glorified, dwells in the Father and at the same time comes to us in the Holy Spirit. And in his new coming, he reveals our union with him and with the Father: "You will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you".

Today, by meditating on these words of Jesus, we perceive with the sense of faith that we are the People of God in communion with the Father and with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. The Church finds the inexhaustible source of her very mission, which is achieved through love, in this mystery of communion. Jesus says in today's Gospel: "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love

him and manifest myself to him". So, love introduces us to the knowledge of Jesus, thanks to the action of this "Advocate" that Jesus sent, that is, the Holy Spirit. Love for God and neighbour is the greatest commandment of the Gospel. The Lord today calls us to respond generously to the Gospel's call to love, placing God at the centre of our lives and dedicating ourselves to the service of our brothers and sisters, especially those most in need of support and consolation.

If ever there is an attitude that is never easy, even for a Christian community, it is precisely how to love oneself, to love after the Lord's example and with his grace. Sometimes disagreements, pride, envy, divisions, leave their mark even on the beautiful face of the Church. A community of Christians should live in the charity of Christ, and instead, it is precisely there that the evil one "sets his foot in" and sometimes we allow ourselves to be deceived. And those who pay the price are those who are spiritually weaker. How many of them — and you know some of them — how many of them have distanced themselves because they did not feel welcomed, did not feel understood, did not feel loved. How many people have distanced themselves, for example, from some parish or community because of the environment of gossip, jealousy, and envy they found there. Even for a Christian, knowing how to love is never a thing acquired once and for all. We must begin anew every day. We must practice it so that our love for the brothers and sisters we encounter may become mature and purified from those limitations or sins that render it incomplete, egotistical, sterile, and unfaithful. We have to learn the art of loving every day. Listen to this: every day we must learn the art of loving; every day we must patiently follow the school of Christ. Every day we must forgive and look to Jesus, and do this with the help of this "Advocate", of this Counsellor whom Jesus has sent to us that is the Holy Spirit.

May the Virgin Mary, the perfect disciple of her Son and Lord, help us to be more and more docile to the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, to learn every day how to love each other as Jesus loved us.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you think it means to be "given the Holy Spirit"? Do you believe you have received the Holy Spirit?
- Have you ever had an experience of the Holy Spirit working in your life? What happened?
- The Holy Spirit has many names like Advocate, Spirit of Truth, Wisdom, Comforter and Helper. Who is the Holy Spirit to you?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.