

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 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.'

REFLECTION OF POPE FRANCIS*17 May 2020*

This Sunday's Gospel passage (cf. Jn 14:15-21) presents two messages: observance of the commandments and the promise of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus links love for him to observance of the commandments, and he insists on this in his farewell discourse: "If you love me, then you will keep my commandments" (v. 15); "He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me" (v. 21). Jesus asks us to love him, but explains: this love does not end in a desire for him, or in a feeling, no; it demands the willingness to follow his way, that is, the will of the Father. And this is summarized in the commandment of mutual love — the first love [in its fulfillment] — given by Jesus himself: "even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (Jn 13:34). He did not say, 'Love me as I have loved you,' but 'love one another as I have loved you.' He loves us without asking us to do the same in return. Jesus'

love is a gratuitous love; he never asks for the same in return. And he wants this gratuitous love of his to become the concrete form of life among us: this is his will.

To help the disciples walk this path, Jesus promises to pray for the Father to send "another Counselor" (v. 16), that is, a Consoler, a Defender, who will take his place and give them the intelligence to listen and the courage to observe his words. This is the Holy Spirit, who is the Gift of God's love that descends into the heart of the Christian. After Jesus has died and risen, his love is given to those who believe in him and are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit himself guides them, enlightens them, strengthens them, so that everyone may walk in life, even through adversity and difficulty, in joys and sorrows, remaining on Jesus' path. This is possible precisely by remaining docile to the Holy Spirit, so that, through his presence at work in us, he may not only console but transform hearts, opening them up to truth and love.

Faced with the experience of error and sin — which we all do — the Holy Spirit helps us not to succumb and enables us to grasp and fully live the meaning of Jesus' words: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (v. 15). The commandments are not given to us as a kind of mirror in which to see the reflection of our miseries, our inconsistencies. No, they are not like that. The Word of God is given to us as the Word of life, which transforms the heart, life; which renews, which does not judge in order to condemn, but heals and has forgiveness as its aim. God's mercy is thus. A Word that is light for our steps. All this is the work of the Holy Spirit! He is the Gift of God; he is God himself, who helps us to be free people, people who want and know how to love, people who understand that life is a mission to proclaim the wonders that the Lord accomplishes in those who trust in him.

May the Virgin Mary, model of the Church, who knows how to listen to the Word of God and to welcome the gift of the Holy Spirit, help us to live the Gospel with joy, knowing that we are sustained by the Spirit, the divine fire that warms our hearts and illuminates our steps.

continued over page ►

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/ Homily?



Head: Jesus links love with keeping his commandments and promises the Spirit to help us; how does this reshape our understanding of love as something active and lived, not just felt?



Heart: “I will not leave you orphans” — Jesus speaks into fear and absence; where do you most feel alone or unsupported, and what does it mean to trust that God is with you there?



Hands: The Spirit is given to guide and strengthen us to live Jesus’ way; what is one concrete way you can respond to that guidance this week, especially in loving others?

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. Offer 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 praying the ‘Glory Be’.