

Reading: John 14:15-21 (NT page 1082)

Reader: Martin Shiels

### **Background to the reading**

On Sunday the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2014 the church will celebrate the day that the Holy Spirit was given to all people, something that Jesus promised to his followers.

Our reading follows on after Thomas and the other disciples heard for the first time that Jesus was going to prepare a place for them at His Father's house with the many rooms. They were upset and did not understand what He meant. Although He told them that if they believe in Him, they too will find the way, the truth and the life.

But that was not enough for them. So Jesus told them not to worry. He will not leave them on their own. He will ask his Father to give them a "parakletos", who will be with them.

The background for calling the Spirit *parakletos* "Counselor" or "Helper" is debated, but it is probably a courtroom image: one sense of the term is "advocate," "defending attorney," "intercessor." Here the Spirit is "another" advocate like Jesus. He would succeed Jesus when He ascends to heaven. Judaism was also familiar with the idea of a "successor" who carries on a predecessor's work.

The Spirit of God is also called the Spirit of truth. He will guide God's people in the way of truth—into a fuller revelation of Jesus, who is the only truth, the way and the life.

Jesus promises that He will not leave them like orphans. He will be present to them through His Spirit. In the OT, "orphans" were powerless and needed a legal defender.

Then Jesus assures them that although He will disappear from the world, those who have faith in Him will still "see" him. They will experience the presence of His Holy Spirit each and every time they obey His commandments. And when they

show their love to Him, by obeying everything he has told them to do, God the Father will love them too.

Amen

## **MP 449**

## **Love divine, all loves excelling**

### **Sermon**

The text verses for the sermon verses 16-17: “<sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— <sup>17</sup> the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”

Jesus’ words was so powerful and the court room image struck a cord with me, especially after watching a few episodes of the Oscar Pistorius’ murder trail. In this trail you can clearly see that his own council is helpless in supporting him when he is questioned by the prosecutor.

So let’s imagine ourselves for a moment. You and I would have been accused of sin. So can you imagine ourselves standing on trail like Oscar Pistorius, having to answer question after question about our sins, our disobedience, our lack of commitment, our lies and our deceit?

But God, the merciful and loving judge changed it all. He took us out of the witness stand by sending Jesus Christ to stand in our place. And He send His Holy Spirit as our advocate to help us through life.

Yes if it was not for Jesus’ sacrifice on our behalf, you and I would have been condemned to death.

And more than that, we would have been utterly alone, no one helping us at all.

But you and I received God’s Holy Spirit. With His help and God’s mercy we are in a position to obey God. And we can only obey God, when we love Him unconditionally. And we can only love, because He loved us first.

And this is exactly what Jesus was saying. When they receive His Holy Spirit they will experience His love in every situation when they obey His command to love. And when they do it, they will no longer be orphans alone in the world. They will have the knowledge of the loving presence of God in their lives.

The metaphor of the orphans is a depiction of how many of us feel at times – vulnerable, exposed, worn out by life, especially when life is hard, when we feel as though we have lost our faith, we have lost hope and most certainly do not feel being loved. It happens especially when we are ill and have to fight life threatening diseases.

And it is then in these moments that we need to realize we are not spiritually alone although it may feel at times as if we are. I guess the Lord is telling us in all situations: we are no longer Spiritual orphans. He is through His Holy Spirit with us, helping us along the way, challenging us with new and sometimes conflicting ideas, holding us in love when we are frail and vulnerable, chastising us lovingly and gently when we do wrong, wiping away our tears and holding our hands when the going gets tough.

And we do not have to feel guilty anymore when someone ask us if we have received the Holy Spirit. We can honestly show them that we have by simply doing and showing love. Because when we obey the Lord's command to love, we will have experience the presence of His Holy Spirit around us.

So we can go out today with so much hope knowing the Lord's Spirit is with us – *everywhere we go as long as we go in faith, hope and love, everywhere we show our love ! Amen*

[a](#) Some early manuscripts *and is*