# The Summit Online Exploring the Word

# 6th Sunday of Easter, Year C

#### **GOSPEL**

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Jesus said to his disciples:

'If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him. Those who do not love me do not keep my words. And my word is not my own: it is the word of the one who sent me. I have said these things to you while still with you; but the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you. Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me say: I am going away, and shall return. If you loved me you would have been glad to know that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you this now before it happens,

(John 14:23-29)

# DID YOU KNOW?

Points of interest and Catholic lore

• The meaning of the word *advocate* is 'one who is summoned to help another'.

so that when it does happen you may believe.'

- Another term commonly used for the Holy Spirit is Paraclete, which comes from a Greek term meaning 'called to the side of' and so has the same meaning as advocate.
- In the Hebrew Scriptures, peace was one of the distinguishing marks of the time of the Messiah—a time when swords would be made into ploughshares (Isaiah 2:4) and the wolf would live with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6).
  Jesus' gift of peace confirms that he is the longed-for Messiah.

# **EXPLORING THE WORD**

Jesus has alluded to the fact that he is going away but that he will one day return. In the meantime, the disciples—the community to whom John is writing his gospel—are living in the 'in-between times'. Jesus has come once in the flesh and has promised to return at the end of the world, so this instruction is a continuation of the teaching on how disciples should live out their faith in Jesus' absence: they must keep his word, the word of God. 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14).

They will not be alone in this task, as Jesus has promised to send the Advocate or the Holy Spirit, who will continue to unfold the word as the Church grows and meets new situations and challenges.

- You could look at the first reading from Acts, which highlights one such situation.
- In conferring the gift of peace on his disciples, Jesus is preparing them for his departure and his absence. This will be a trial for the disciples, but the peace of Christ and the Holy Spirit will help them to understand his return to the Father and to be confident that they too will one day make that journey.
- How do you cope with the 'absence' of Jesus? In what ways do you experience Christ's presence?
- How do you experience the Spirit in your life?

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

Opportunities for group discussion and personal prayer

- 'Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.' What aspects of life frighten you?
- How do you experience the 'peace the world cannot give'?
- Reflect back on a period in your life when you were anxious, troubled or afraid. How did the situation resolve itself? In what ways did you experience a sense of peace after the turmoil? Share your reflections with others.
- Try to stand up for someone this week who may be in need of a defender. Take on the role of an advocate.
  Alternatively, you could try to bring the gift of peace to someone whose heart is troubled or afraid.
- This week, use today's prayer after Communion:
- Almighty and ever living God, who restore us to eternal life in the Resurrection of Christ, increase in us we pray, the fruits of the paschal Sacrament and pour into our hearts the strength of this saving food.

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#### SHARING THE TRADITION

A closer look at the Scripture of the day, to see how it makes more explicit God's word to us through the teachings of Jesus Christ

The situation of the Church has changed again and again through its 2000-year history. In the beginning were periods of persecution and violence; these gave way to a settled period and gradual growth. The Church has enjoyed times of strong political support and even political power, and times of threat and decline. At times it has engaged in war to safeguard its position of dominance, and it has distanced itself from political power at other times. The ebbs and flows of the Church's understanding of itself and its role in the world are fascinating.

- Explore the changing role of the Church over the centuries. Can you identify times when the guidance of the Holy Spirit could have been better sought? Can you identify times when the guidance of the Spirit led the Church in new ways?
- You could discuss the Second Vatican Council and the Church's self-understanding as articulated in the documents of the council.
- Vatican II spoke of how God, who spoke in the past, 'continues to converse' with the Church (*Dei Verbum* §8). Through the Plenary Council in 2021, the Catholic Church in Australia has sought to enter more intensely into that divine-human dialogue. What are the challenges facing the Church today, and where do you think the guidance of the Spirit is needed now?
- Reflect on the leadership of Pope Francis. In what directions is he leading his flock? How should we follow?

#### SYMBOLS AND IMAGES

In the gospels, Jesus promises many times to send the Holy Spirit to be a guide and a help to his followers after his ascension. What do you think the role of the Holy Spirit is in the life of the Church today and in your own life?

### LIVING THE WORD

Practical ideas for group leaders to employ in connecting Scripture and daily life, with suggestions for music and environment

- In what ways does your community seek to discern the guidance of the Spirit—for example, in the reflections of a pastoral council? Are there ways that the newly baptised can become involved in this discernment?
- Continue to use the Easter and initiation symbols as a focus for prayer. Pray for the Church of which you are now a member. Pray for its leaders and guides. You could sing an Easter song or a song of the Spirit. Conclude with an adaptation of the prayer for the laying on of hands in the RCIA at §301.

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