

## Sixth Sunday of Easter – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Eight weeks into the lockdown and I guess we all have had a few lows and hopefully a few highs to keep us going, as we walk together this path being marked out so powerfully at the moment by such an infinitely small thing as a virus. This virus seems to be walking alongside everyone's life, and sadly for some, living inside infected persons, and it seems to be guiding and dictating everyone's thoughts and feelings - and it even appears to be making lots of us unsettled and unable to make decisions about many things. This virus invites us to walk along a path of uncertainty and confusion from time to time – amazingly, something unseen by the vast majority of humanity is guiding us and others!

But, when I read today's Scripture Readings for Mass, I notice that we too are given something or should I say someone to walk alongside us and who will live not outside of us only but will live in us – not something that spreads fear, confusion, illness, anxiety and causes loneliness to ensue, but rather someone who brings calm, peace, order, healing, gentleness and unity and causes the building up of the community of the Body of Christ.

Today, as we approach Pentecost (31<sup>st</sup> May this year, in two Sundays time) we are reminded that Jesus will send – indeed has sent - another Advocate (Jesus being the first Advocate), 'to be with (us) for ever, that Spirit of truth.' Jesus further comforts us when He says of the Advocate – The Holy Spirit – 'you know Him, because He is with you, He is in you.' This Advocate, a person who stands alongside someone to bring them support, justice and comfort – is God Himself, The Holy Spirit. Like the virus not many people have seen the Holy Spirit, and as with the virus we too can feel the effects of The Holy Spirit, and these effects are far more powerful than any microscopic entity like COVID 19 can produce. For COVID is the creature not the Creator!

The Holy Spirit has already come into the world, in particular at the First Pentecost, and this Spirit of Truth can never be overcome. We cannot deny the turmoil, the pain and the upset that this virus has and is causing, but we as people of faith – we as the Body of Christ - need to be fully open and aware to the Presence of the Great Comforter, The Holy Spirit, in our lives.

The Holy Spirit, The Great Comforter is manifesting in amazing ways – people in discomfort are being comforted by the neighbour they hardly knew ten weeks ago; people who have excess resources and time are sharing their excess with those who have less; families who never had a chance to truly talk and share themselves with each other are finding each other once again; people who never really prayed or went to church are finding a new spiritual thirst being met through the internet.

Let us pray that as with the communities in our First Reading we and those who are finding Jesus more recently will continue to accept the Word of God and will come to be fully open to receiving The Holy Spirit – the True Comforter in life and for life.

We have to continue to pray that Humanity continues to act as an advocate to all in the power of The Holy Spirit and following the example of the self-sacrificing and self-giving of Jesus Christ to Humanity; for as Jesus reminds us, earlier in John, 'A person can have no greater love than to lay down their life for their friends. You are my friends.' Let us pray that humanity has this reality in their hearts and on their lips: for we now in today's environment have the opportunity to stop seeing each other as servants and commodities caught up in a material world (at least in the developed world) but can break free from this and see each other as friend within the one global village, or to use our Christian language to recognise that we are all part of the One Body of Christ.

Let us not waste this opportunity, let us carve out our path of being advocates to each other and not allow the virus to lead us along paths we would rather not go!

Let us pray this week to The Holy Spirit asking for the courage and creativity to know how to become an advocate to those around us who may need that bit of extra help, support and reassurance that all will be well, for God is with us and in us.