

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA, MUMBLES
Reflection for
Sixth Sunday of Eastertide Year A, 17 May 2020
(May be used for Home Prayer Service)
Dominican Friars, Swansea

This reflection may be used during the home prayer service. Please see the home prayer service sheet for details.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In today's gospel reading, Jesus continues his farewell speech to his disciples. Last Sunday, he comforted them that in going to heaven, he was going to prepare rooms for them. Today, he promises to send them another Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, who will be with them forever.

While we are still in the Easter season, the mood of our liturgical celebration is now being directed towards the Solemnity of the Ascension which we shall celebrate on Thursday. Knowing that his disciples were saddened by the impending event of his ascension into heaven, Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit. Also, the disciples needed the Holy Spirit to help them to carry out the mission of preaching which Christ was going to entrust to them.

The Holy Spirit of Love: Christ came among us to teach us how to love the Father who loved us even before the foundations of the world (cf. 1 Jn 4:10). He knows our human weaknesses and limitations. He knows how much we struggle to love the Father and keep his commandments of love. He knows that unaided, we cannot love God as we should. For this reason, he promised to send us the Holy Spirit so that we will be empowered to love God and keep his commandments of love. The Holy Spirit will also help us to express the love of the Father to everyone we encounter. God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God is in such person (1 Jn 4:16). Our love of Christ is expressed in keeping his commandment of love.

The Holy Spirit of Truth: In last Sunday's gospel reading, Christ referred to himself as the Truth. This Truth of Christ is what the Holy Spirit will teach us. He will not teach us anything new other than what we already learnt from Christ. As humans, we sometimes struggle to recall some information about our past experiences. In the light of this, we use symbols to help us keep in touch with these experiences. In the same vein, our Lord Jesus assures us that the Holy Spirit will always be in our minds to lead us to this Truth. Through the Holy Spirit, the Divine Law shall be written in our hearts (cf.

Jer 31:33). Moreover, this promise of the Holy Spirit is a fulfilment of the promise made through the Prophet Isaiah (cf. Is 59:21).

Likewise, the Holy Spirit will be the agent of filling the apostles with the message of preaching. The contents of the apostolic preaching shall not be human words but the Divine Truth. The courage of preaching fearlessly shall also be infused by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the apostles preached fearlessly before governors and kings. In addition, the Holy Spirit whom Christ will send into his Church will also fortify them to stand strong in the face of persecution. As we recorded in our Second Reading, we may have to suffer for doing what is right, for inviting peoples to experience the mercy of God. Yet, we are to do this with gentleness, love and reverence of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Pt 3:15-18).

The Holy Spirit of Divine Presence: In order to assure them of his everlasting presence, Christ promised not to leave his disciples desolate. On the contrary, he assured them that the Holy Spirit will dwell with them. With this Messianic promise, John picks up the Matthean theme of 'Emmanuel' (cf. Mt 1:23) and makes the Holy Spirit the subject of this divine indwelling. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God lives and works in us.

In the First Reading, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the city of Samaria brought so much joy to the dwellers through the preaching of Philip (cf. Acts 8:4-8). Similarly, the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church to give her life and lead her on the mission of evangelisation.

While the Holy Spirit comes into the Church to direct her, the Father and the Son are not withdrawn on a sabbatical leave. On the contrary, the Holy Trinity continues to work as a Godhead to conform us to the mysteries of the divine love. We may then rightly say: in the person of God the Father, God loves us. In the person of God the Son, God saves us. In the person of God the Holy Spirit, God dwells in us.