

Sermon, 5/25/2025

- In today's Gospel Jesus is speaking to his disciples:
 - "I have said these things to you while I am 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 that I have said to you."
 - There it is, perhaps, the biggest "*But*" in the New Testament.
- ...and that *really* does turn out to be a *really* important thing.
 - John's Gospel goes into great detail about the coming of the Holy Spirit in 3 different chapters. The evangelist tries to explain *before* Jesus' Passion and Crucifixion that Jesus is going away. Jesus knows he's scaring his Apostles: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."
 - Jesus tries to use the Holy Spirit to prop up the Apostles before His Passion; to give them some hope. But it doesn't work.
 - During the Last Supper in Mark's Gospel Jesus foretells that Peter will deny Jesus; *that* "all" of the Apostles "will fall away." The last time we see an Apostle in Mark's Gospel will be when Peter does, in *fact*, deny Peter 3 times. As Jesus foretells, the cock will crow, and we will not see an Apostle in the remaining chapters of Mark's original Gospel ending. Most likely they have all gone "back to the sea."
 - In chapter 16 of John's Gospel, Jesus promises that Holy Spirit will come to prove the "world wrong...because they do not believe in me"; wrong "because I *am* going to the Father"; and wrong "because the ruler of this world has been *condemned*."

Who is this Holy Spirit?

- Explaining who the Holy Spirit is, *especially* who the Spirit is for *me*, today, was more difficult than I thought. Here's how I would say it on this Sunday morning:
The Holy Spirit is the Love between God the Father and God the Son, the Father being the lover, the Son the beloved. But the Holy Spirit is also the Third person of the Holy Trinity. In that "person," I wonder if the Holy Spirit is the element of the Trinity that "proceeds" from God the Father and the Son into our world precisely as God's Love, God's Unity. This Spirit of God was "hovering" over the waters during the Genesis creation story; spoke through the Prophets in the Old Testament; and was there when Mary conceived Jesus.
But, who is the Holy Spirit for me, today?
- One of my favorite writers is Jesuit Priest, Fr. Thomas Reese. Fr. Reese describes the Holy Spirit this way:

“Every child who has a loving parent, has experienced the Spirit. The faithful love we experience from friends and spouses is an experience of the Spirit. The innocent and trusting love of children is a sign of the Spirit. Whenever we feel impelled to love, it is not just hormones; it is the power of the Spirit.”

That’s as close as I could ever come to describing who the Spirit is to me; but I’d love to know who the Holy Spirit is for you...

Fr. Reese continues:

“The Spirit is present in everyone, calling us to be more than we ever thought we could be. Only the Spirit gives us the power to love unselfishly, to sacrifice ourselves for another, to commit ourselves with fidelity in good times and in bad, to put justice *above* our own advantage.”

The Spirit is the divine DNA in all God’s creation: every one of God’s children, everything God has created.

Let me close with another favorite of mine, Trappist Priest Fr. Thomas Keating of Centering Prayer fame:

"The start, middle, and end of the spiritual journey is the conviction that God is *always* present. As we progress in this journey, we perceive God's presence more and more.

2,000 years ago God the Father sent his “beloved” Son to become “incarnate”; “enfleshed”; “God with us.” Some 30 years later Jesus told his Apostles He would send an Advocate, the Holy Spirit to “teach them everything” and to “*remind*” them of everything He had said. On the first Pentecost, Jesus did just that.

14 days from now we’ll get the “*reminder*.”