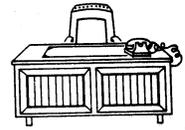


6th Sunday of Easter

May 14, 2023



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Sunday Reflection:

This Sunday's gospel is part of what is known as the Last Supper discourse. The gospel is to be understood in the context of next Sunday being the celebration of the Ascension, followed by Pentecost Sunday the following week. Jesus tells his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth..."

Keeping the commandments is the irrefutable evidence of the disciples' love for the Master and a condition for the sending of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in turn reinforces the love of God and the ability to keep the commandments. It also means that those who do not keep God's commandments cannot claim to love God. The same could be said of human relationships. One should not claim to love someone while at the same time doing things that hurt the one loved.

In another passage, Jesus makes clear that the greatest of the commandments is love, that is love of God and love of neighbor. It means there is not getting around LOVE if we desire friendship with God. In essence, Jesus is telling his disciples that his Ascension will not mean the termination of their friendship nor the end of his advocacy on their behalf, as long as they keep the commandments.

Obviously, keeping the commandments could be a struggle. However, one should never stop trying. Once the habit is cultivated, it becomes a way of life. It is comforting to know that the Holy Spirit compliments our efforts and makes what is difficult easy and the impossible possible. The Church cannot do much without the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be described as the life-blood of the Church.

As Jesus prepared to ascend to the Father at the conclusion of his mission, he sensed the fear of his disciples. They had reason to be afraid since those who put him to death were still seeking to destroy whatever is left of his movement. His assurance to the disciples was that he would not leave them alone as orphans. He promised to send them another advocate to protect and guide them.

To speak of another advocate is an acknowledgement that Jesus is not only the Messiah but also an Advocate. An advocate is one who argues the case of another before a tribunal or judicial court. As an Advocate, he pleads on behalf of the Church before the Father. In his absence, the Holy Spirit becomes our Advocate. The burden of sin and the weight of guilt make it almost impossible to represent ourselves. We need an advocate to speak on our behalf.

The persecution environment under which the apostles functioned necessitated an Advocate to stand on their behalf as they were dragged before tribunals and the Sanhedrin. The Advocate will give them the wisdom to say the right things and the courage to withstand intimidation from their adversary. Similarly, as Church and as individual members of the Church, we need the advocacy of the Holy Spirit to function and to accomplish our mission in the face of opposition. There is only one condition -keeping the commandments. To further assist us, Jesus also gave us the sacrament of reconciliation. When we fail, we have to keep trying until we get it right. Therefore, we should strive to take advantage of this sacrament of mercy.

Have a great week!

Fr. Romanus