

Sixth Sunday of Easter

Sunday April 27, 2008

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66; 1 Peter 3: 15-18; John 14: 15-21

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This Sunday we are reminded of the gift of God's love, freely given to each of us. We don't need to earn it or do anything special to receive it.

Jesus says, "I will not leave you orphans." Have you ever watched a parent loving a child? Have you watched the deep love, the self sacrificing unconditional love that they attempt to give? Watching that deep love helps us to get a hint of what God's love is like. "God gave up his only Son." This passage comes home to me in watching some of my friends and siblings with their children. How could a parent possibly give up a child, an only son to boot? Human parents would never choose to leave their children orphans, how much more clearly do we experience God's tender gentle love for us!

Not only does Jesus love us and stay with us, "in us," but he also asks the Father to send us the Spirit. The Spirit is present with us, to lead us, to guide us and to help us along the way. In many translations of scripture the Spirit is described as our Advocate. Webster's Dictionary defines advocate as "one who pleads another's cause." When have I felt the Spirit being my Advocate? Do I quiet myself enough in my daily life to hear and feel the movements of the Spirit?

It must have been hard for the disciples to hear that Jesus needed to go. However, Jesus wanted to make sure that they were and we are never alone. Jesus stays with us and "in us" and asks the Father to send "another Advocate to be with you always." Jesus will always be there. In sharing with some friends about this passage, one reflected on the part of Jesus being "in us" ... He shared that he recently got a phone call that a friend he had not seen in 20 years just passed away. The memories of his friend were still very present in his mind. He felt this may be a way Jesus was "in him." Like the memories that have been there for over twenty years.

Because Jesus is always there we have reason to Hope! Peter in his letter reminds us that we should, "always be ready to give an explanation ... a reason for your hope." We have much to fuel our HOPE! Jesus loves us, is with us and "in us" and has asked the Father to send the Spirit, the Advocate. Knowing that we are never alone, we always

have Jesus is a powerful reason to HOPE! Jesus promises to be with us always in the presence of the Spirit!

In these next few weeks we continue to hear much about the Spirit, the Advocate. In the Acts of the Apostles today, we hear that when the people of Samaria “accepted the word of God,” then Peter and John were sent to them to pray over them for the Holy Spirit. Remember from Jesus’ time that Samaria was a place “good Jews” avoided. However, Jesus uses Samaritans to make points in several of his parables: The “Good Samaritan” and the “Woman of Samaria.” So the disciples had to accept and be open to all these people that the Spirit was calling in their acceptance of the word of God.

So where does all this leave us in the 21st century? Have I ever taken the time to realize how deeply Jesus loves me? Am I willing to share love after Jesus’ example? Willing to love unconditionally? Who in my life needs my love? Who in my life is the most difficult person to love? Jesus loves that person and wants to help me to be able to love him or her, too.