

May 17, 2020 | Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

[Acts 8:5-8,14-17](#)

[Ps 66:1-7, 16, 20](#)

[1 Peter 3: 15-18](#)

[John 14:15-21](#)

By Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

As we approach Pentecost, the readings are filled with the promise of the Spirit. In today's gospel passage from John, Jesus identifies this spirit as a παράκλητος, a paraclete, an advocate, a helper. Why would the followers of Jesus need a helper? What would this paraclete or advocate do that they could not do themselves? Jesus' identification continues — this advocate is the Spirit of truth. Now we see. The disciples will need this Spirit of truth because the world will not accept the truth of the gospel message they will proclaim.

As is so often the case in John's gospel, various religious themes are woven through it. The themes here include paraclete, truth, and love, all these themes are held within a Trinitarian context (Jesus, his Father, and the Spirit of Truth). The major focus of this combination of themes might be stated quite simply: Those who love God will listen to and obey God's word because it is a word of truth. However, the word must be proclaimed to all, and those who proclaim it are promised the Spirit of truth to strengthen their proclaiming. What was once the mission of the Son (proclaiming the reign of God) has become the mission of the Spirit who accomplishes this through the disciples. The disciples now participate in the mission of the Trinity.

"Whoever has my commandments and observes them...whoever loves me...is loved by my Father." Of whom is the author speaking? The disciples only? Certainly not. The criteria for inclusion in the group that loves and is loved is threefold: listen, obey, and love. The first reading demonstrates how this might work. From the very beginning, the first disciples brought the message of the gospel to whoever would listen. "God knows no partiality." Philip went into the hated city of Samaria. If there was any group whom the followers of Jesus might disdain, it would be the Samaritans. They were unclean bastard Jews, descendants of marriage between conquered Jews and resettled Assyrians. Still, Philip preached and the people listened. The Jews had ostracized the Samaritans, but "God knows no partiality." It seems that anyone who listened to the word might receive the Spirit. What has happened?

The answer to this question is found in the psalm response: "Let all on earth worship and sing praise to you." The summons is directed to all the earth, not simply to the children of Israel. In other words, "God knows no partiality." This Spirit of truth is not given so that it can be hugged to oneself. Rather, the disciples were called to open themselves so that the Spirit might work through them for the sake of others. As stated above, the word of the gospel must be proclaimed

to all, and those who proclaim it are promised the Spirit of truth to strengthen their proclaiming. What was once the mission of the Son (proclaiming the reign of God) has become the mission of the Spirit who accomplishes this through the disciples. Today we are those disciples; today we are the ones who participate in the mission of the Trinity. This mission looks beyond cultural or religious differences. It is for “whoever.”

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