

Today is the sixth Sunday of Easter. We will celebrate the Ascension of the Lord next Sunday. And one week after that will be Pentecost Sunday. As we approach the feast of Pentecost, the Church invites us to celebrate the coming of the Advocate. She calls us to celebrate the Spirit of truth. Jesus tells us today in the Gospel, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth."

We have heard Jesus continuously offering to strengthen us by his words, "do not be afraid" because "I am with you." "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep." Last week, he gave us his comforting words: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me... I go to prepare a place for you. I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be." And today, in the Gospel, He continues to confirm that, "I will not leave you orphans, because when I go back to the Father, "I will ask the Father to give you another Advocate, the Spirit of truth."

Today, I want to focus on Jesus' promise, "the Spirit of truth." We usually think of the Holy Spirit as the love of God, but we rarely remember that the Holy Spirit is truth. Yes, absolutely, 'God is love' (1 John 4:16) but he is also the God of truth. The Old Testament refers to the Almighty as the "God of truth" (Is. 65:16)... Jesus said of Himself, "I am...the truth" (John 14:6). And in the Gospel today, Jesus promised to send us "the Spirit of truth."

In our lives, truth is very important for us because without truth we are lost; We don't know what is right; We don't know good from evil. We are lost even when we love one another without truth. In a family, for example, if the parents love their children and give them whatever they want, but don't show them truth and never correct them, what will happen to their children?

I want to share with you a story related to love and truth. There was a man who was convicted of murder and executed. Before his execution, he was allowed to speak his last words. He said the thing he regretted most was that when he was young his parents allowed him to do whatever he wanted. They did not correct him, even when they saw him stealing something. Because they did not correct him, he continued to steal things that were increasingly more valuable, until one day he robbed a bank and killed some people.

This man's story shows us that though his parents loved him, they loved without truth. They did not teach him truth because they were afraid of making him upset. But, while they thought that they were loving him, actually they were killing him. Love without truth will lead to evil and ultimately to death.

Jesus loves people, but He loves them with truth. Bishop Nguyen Van Kham in Vietnam gave us a wonderful explanation about Jesus' love with truth. Bishop Kham said that when we read the Gospel, we easily recognized Jesus' love when he healed the sick, cured the crippled, cleansed the lepers, or raised the dead to life; however, we might not

have recognized his love when He called Herod “the fox” or pointed to the pharisees and called them “the Hypocrites.” According to Bishop Kham, our Lord Jesus loved them all, the sinners, the sick, the poor, the rich, and even the corrupt authorities. Because he loved them, he showed them truth. He loved them even when he corrected them. He loved them with a love in truth, the Spirit of truth.

We really need truth in our lives. So, Jesus emphasizes that he will send us another Advocate, who is the Spirit of truth. And we are invited to live in truth because it will lead us to life. Because only truth can bring us freedom. Only truth can make us free people. Jesus tells us, “you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

Truth is important for us. We need truth. But, where do we find that truth? In the first reading today, we hear of Philip preaching the Gospel in Samaria and many Samaritans coming to accept the Gospel. Afterwards, the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to Samaria to pray for them and to lay hands on them so that they also could receive the Holy Spirit. The Samaritans had received Baptism through Deacon Phillip, but it was the Apostles, Peter and John, who brought them the Holy Spirit by “laying hands on them” in the sacrament of Confirmation. It fits with the teaching of the Church that *“The ordinary minister of the Sacrament of Confirmation is the bishop and if the need arises, He may grant the faculty to priests.”* (CCC 1313)

So, the answer for where we find the truth is that we receive the Holy Spirit of truth **from God** but **through the Church**, and above all, **through the Apostles**. In modern times, the successors of the Apostles are the Pope and Bishops. So, we as Catholics listen to and obey the Pope. We listen to and obey the Pope and Bishops because we believe that the Holy Spirit is present in them and acts through them. So, when we listen to them, we listen not to their voices, but to the voice of God.

With the Spirit of truth, the Church continues to preach the Gospel and to love people in truth, even when they may not recognize her love, ignore her teachings, or deny the truth.

My brothers and sisters, Jesus promised us, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate... the Spirit of truth.” Let us allow these words to lead us in our faith and in our lives. Especially during this challenging time, may God help us receive His love in truth and share it with others, because only a love in truth can lead us to true peace and life.

Fr. Linh Bui
May 2020