

Chapel Homily: The Coming and Abiding of the Holy Spirit May 27, 2020

Today I want to tell you about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who is with us, in us, among us, always. After God raised Jesus from death and into new and everlasting life (on the day we celebrate as Easter), Jesus came to be with his friends many times. All of a sudden he would just be there among them, anywhere, any time. He talked with them; he ate with them. Sometimes they shared food with him that they had prepared. At least once, he had cooked grilled fish and bread on the beach by a lake and shared it with them.

Then the day came for him to return to God the Father. On that day, his friends actually watched him ascend -- actually go up into heaven through the clouds. Earlier, Jesus had told them, "I am going to the Father, and you will not see me anymore." (Jn. 16:10) But he also had promised them that he would not leave them alone.

He promised that he and God the Father would send someone called the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. He also called the Holy Spirit by another name, a name that means "Advocate" -- that is, somebody who stands up for you, somebody who goes with you and helps you. That name also means "Comforter", somebody who cares for you when you are hurt, sad, afraid.

The Holy Spirit comes to us, too, and to the world. Not as a human being, as a person, as Jesus came. The Spirit didn't come to his followers as a person, either. When the Spirit came to his friends, it was in the form of a great wind that shook the house where they were staying. And it rested on each of them, as something that looked like tongues of fire. All of them were filled with the Spirit. (Acts 2:1-3) And the Spirit stayed with them, as Jesus promised. The Spirit comes to us, also; into our hearts, into our own inner spirit. As Jesus promised, the Holy Spirit is always with us.

Jesus once told his friends, and he says to us, "Peace be with you; my peace I leave with you. Do not let your hearts be troubled [or afraid]." Sometimes his followers would be worried or afraid after they were separated from him. But the Holy Spirit was always with them, as it is always with us, to give us the courage, the power, the love and the grace that holds us together forever as friends, as a community, one body, God's people in the world, even when we are physically away from each other.

This is a gift to remember at this time every year as we come to the end of the school year, when we know that many of us will not be together in one place for a few months over the summer, and that some of us will not be back at Grace as students again.

The Holy Spirit is a gift we can give thanks for especially this year because of the virus. We haven't been together in one place for weeks. We don't know when we'll be together again in one place; and when we finally are together again, some of us—the 5th

grade students who are graduating, Mrs. Kennedy, Mrs. Scott and Mrs. Morrison—will have moved on to new schools and to new times of their lives.

My hope for you, all of you, is that you will always remember and know deep in your heart that we are together with God and each other in the Holy Spirit. We are held together in love by God's Holy Spirit sent into the world long, long ago to be our counselor, the one always alongside to help us and care for us, who lives in all our hearts, wherever we are, forever. Amen.