

Homily: 6th Sunday of Easter: Cycle A: 2017: Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Ps. 66; 1 Peter 3: 15-18; Jn 14: 15-21

“A Reason for Our Hope”

Jesus said to 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, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows Him.”*

1. **The Holy Spirit**, whom Jesus is talking about, is the soul of the Catholic Church and of our spiritual lives as individual members of the Church. He is the protector of the Deposit of Faith. This is why the gates of Hell will never prevail against the Catholic Church because no matter what the crisis - the Holy Spirit is there to guide us through it. Thankfully the survival of the Catholic Church doesn't depend on us human beings.☺ The Holy Spirit is the person of the Trinity who brings us into union with the Father and the Eternal Son, who became one of us in Jesus. If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives through his spiritual gifts, which we received in Baptism and Confirmation, and His daily inspirations then we will have **a new freedom in Christ.** We no longer will simply follow the “rules” of God out of slavish fear or a legalistic mentality, but instead will obey the 10 Commandments and the teachings of the Church on faith and morals, even the difficult ones, out of a deeper sense of love for God and neighbor, with an interior freedom that comes from the Holy Spirit. We will be converted deeper and deeper into the truth of God, rather than the make-believe things of the world which human beings, who are not in tune with the Holy Spirit, often stake their hopes on: *money, worldly success, sinful pleasure and self-will in its various forms:* the tragic end result of all this is: indifference to God and the things of God which could lead to eternal separation from the only source of Life: the blessed Trinity. Jesus came so we would not settle for these false realities which will quickly dissipate in the light of eternity - but rather to have the fullness of life in Him!
2. **Jesus reminds us the only way this fullness of life comes about:** *If we love Him then we will keep His Commandments, and He promises then **to reveal Himself to us.*** What does this mean? Well it means that our Catholic faith comes alive and we sense more and more the presence of our loving and merciful God in our daily lives

sometimes in a tangible way, especially when we go through the difficult trials and tribulations of life - when He is in reality most close to us. **Over time we gain a deeper liberation in Christ and the peace in our hearts that the world neither understands or can give to us.** This is the deeper conversion, the holiness, which we are all called to by our Baptism: to become a person guided more and more by the Holy Spirit who molds us over time into the image of Christ, in all that we say, and think, and do. Let's pray that God will bless each of us with that gift every day.

3. Once we have this real experience of liberation in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to better witness to others concerning the gift of Faith. St. Peter makes reference to this today in the 2nd reading, "*Beloved, sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence.*" All of us have **opportunities** to humbly, gently, and quietly (not loudly and obnoxiously☺) share how the Lord has worked and continues to work in our lives over time: *in our families, in our workplace, neighborhood, school, and social settings.* Let's ask the Holy Spirit to make us more aware of these opportunities to witness and to have **the courage** that comes from Him to draw others to the Lord Jesus, who alone is the Way, the Truth and the Life and to the gift of the Catholic Church which He founded on the rock of St. Peter the first Pope down to our current Pope Francis. It's only in the Holy Spirit that we acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of the universe; it's also only by drawing ever closer to God in prayer that we can effectively share our Faith with our fellow human beings. May the Holy Spirit help us to do so in love; **it's the greatest gift we can share with others.** Our God is so good, just as Jesus promised in last week-end's Gospel that He is going to "prepare a place for us in His Father's house," today He says the following, "*I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in the Father, and you are in me and I in you. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.*" Never forget this promise of Jesus. God bless you.