

IV EASTER 2024

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

ST. JAMES 1.17-21 ST. JOHN 16.5-15



Good-byes are never easy, especially when we might not see our friends again for a very long time. The Internet makes it easy to stay connected through e-mail or video chat. Then there is the thing some of us remember...the telephone. But it's not the same as being with our friends in person.

Jesus told his disciples he is going back to the Father who sent him. They were sad at hearing these words because they didn't want him to go away. But Jesus told them it was expedient he go away. If he doesn't go away...the Helper (the Comforter in the KJV) will not come to them.

The Helper Jesus is talking about is the Holy Spirit. He is the Comforter, Strengthener, Intercessor, Standby and most importantly, our **Advocate**. The Latin *advocatus*...from which we get the word Advocate literally means "one who walks alongside us".

At the end of the long Prayer for the Church in the Mass we acknowledge Jesus to be "our only Mediator and Advocate" (BCP, Page 75). Jesus promised when he went back to the Father he would send another Advocate (the Holy Spirit) who will stay with us forever.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus tells us what the Holy Spirit will do...

...He will reveal the truth about God and lead us into all the truth,

...He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears and will tell us of things to come,

...He will give glory to Jesus, because he takes what Jesus says and tells it to us

Jesus tells us everything the Father has is his, and the Holy Spirit will take what he gives him and tell it to us.

The disciples didn't understand what Jesus was saying. They had not yet experienced the life-changing event of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit...would open their hearts, their minds and their eyes as he has opened ours to the truth of what he said. The Holy Spirit...our Advocate...is the gift that keeps on giving...and spiritually recharges us.

In the Epistle readings for this week and next week Saint James talks about hearing God's word and then putting what we hear into action. It is the singular gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to hear God's word as we should and then act upon what we hear by doing good works.

James writes every good gift and every perfect present comes from heaven. God only gives us good gifts and perfect presents. It is not in his nature to give us bad gifts or imperfect presents. He created the stars in the sky. He is consistent in the blessings he gives us and never changes or turns away from us.

The Collect reminds us it is God alone who can bring order to our lives when things get out of control and are disordered. We want to remain firm in our love for him and the things he wants us to do. We want our faith to remain strong when we find ourselves confronted with the "sundry and manifold changes of the world".

In the Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent we acknowledge it is God who has caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. The Holy Spirit empowers us to "hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" the words of Holy Scripture and then to have the right thoughts, words and actions.

James tells us we have the "word of truth" planted in our hearts." He tells us to be "quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry". We should think before we speak. Words can be harmful and left unchecked can lead to anger and outright hatred. Our anger keeps us from loving God and doing the good works he want us to do.

God has given all of us good gifts and perfect presents...not because he has to...because he wants to...they are an expression of his love...and he wants us to enjoy them to the fullest and use them wisely.

It was as hard for Jesus to say good-bye to his friends as it was for them to say good-bye to him. But Jesus told them they would never be alone. He hasn't left us alone either...we have his Holy Spirit...our Advocate...walking alongside us...until he comes again!

