

Homily (6th Sunday of Easter) – 5/21/2017

Let's try to pretend that you are members of the graduating class of 2017. You and your classmates are about to graduate. The invited commencement speaker is well known. He is known in almost every country, down through the centuries. You have heard about him since you were a little girl or boy. The commencement speaker's name is Jesus Christ. Now, he stands before you as you get ready to face the world just as he stood before his first disciples in today's gospel. You wonder if his speech will be too long, will he say anything important or will you quickly forget it. Jesus stands at the microphone and begins his speech with these words:

"If you are going to live like me, you are going to need a lawyer, I will set you up with one. I will put in a good word with my heavenly Father and he will send you the advocate - the spirit of truth.

Now, why did Jesus say that? An advocate is what a lawyer does, advocates, protects, represents advances the interests of another. Why does Jesus think we need this advocate, this spirit of truth.

Well, Jesus himself could not have made it without this advocate. And you and I can't either. Jesus could not have done all that he did without the Holy Spirit advocating for him, inspiring him. Jesus was a Spirit led man. So he looks out at you, looks at your sincerity, sees your good will, your knowledge of him and says, "You are going to need a lawyer! You are not going to be able to grow God in you, without this advocate.

Have you ever needed a lawyer? You and I do not know the law. That is why there are so many lawyers advertising on television: "Have you been hurt on the job, call my law firm." The legal system's complicated, could get taken advantage of you without a lawyer. You could be in the right. You could sincerely argue your case before Judge Judy. But there are people, who could twist the truth, take advantage of you. If you are involved with legal matters, you would be wise to get yourself a lawyer, one who advocates for you. Same, with following Jesus and living a Christian life. God knows it's hard to get all of the Christian life right. It is hard to act morally in today's world, it is difficult to mature emotionally in today's culture, it is almost impossible to live a deep spiritual life in today's society.

The advocate Jesus sends does not focus on legal matters but how to live a human life like God. The Holy Spirit advocated for him, guided him, tutored him, in-spirited him, inspired him.

Does this sound spooky? Are commencement speeches spooky or inspiring? David Brooks columnist for the New York Times speaking at Dartmouth:

“You have to give to receive. You have to surrender yourself to something outside yourself to gain strength within yourself. You have to conquer your desire to get what you crave.”

Success leads to the greatest failure which is arrogance and pride. Failure can lead to the greatest success which is humility and learning. In order to fulfill yourself, you have to forget yourself. In order to find yourself you have to lose yourself.” This Jewish man sounds like another Jewish man Jesus.

Did you notice that all commencement speeches are peppered with themes of hope, courage, perseverance, love, fidelity, wisdom. These are all similar to the presence and signs of the Holy Spirit. Could it be that these commencement speeches with their themes of wisdom and fortitude, faith, hope, courage, self-control are describing that advocate we call the holy spirit.

Is this what our wounded world desperately needs? Is this why Jesus said:

“You are going to need a lawyer. I will put in a good word with my Heavenly Father, and he will send you the same one I used, the advocate, Holy Spirit?”