

Homily Sixth Sunday of Easter 2023

Today on this Sixth Sunday of Easter we celebrate Mother's Day. Many of us will do something to express appreciation and love for our moms (this weekend) today. Instead of sharing about the things a mom would say I would like to start today with 6 Things A Mother Would Never Say.

"How on earth can you see the TV sitting so far back?"

"Yeah, I used to skip school a lot, too."

"Let me smell that shirt — Yeah, it's good for another week."

"Go ahead and keep that stray dog, honey. I'll be glad to feed and walk him every day."

"I don't have a tissue with me... just use your sleeve."

"Don't bother wearing a jacket — the wind-chill is bound to improve."

I hope these things gave you a chuckle. Today (This weekend) we will remember and express our appreciation for our moms. My most powerful memory of my mom is how hard she worked to create a safe place for her son who had many allergies.

Just as moms always advocate for their children so Jesus gives a teaching today on how his disciples will go on without him. It will be by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus knew what his disciples were feeling as they gathered together in the Upper Room. Jesus knows that his disciples will face many challenges, and many claims to truth. He knew that life would be overwhelming and complicated. In his day, the primary challenge to the people came from the Roman Empire. And believe it or not, many of us know that challenge as well, not because of any occupying empire, but because of the occupying "forces" of the modern world; think politics, computers, jobs, smartphones, disease, and poverty. Jesus knew that we would be surrounded by many forces that would seek to separate us from God the Father, and so as he prepared to leave this earth, he gave the Holy Spirit to keep us united with God and God's love. Think about all that means. We are not orphans, we don't even need to feel overpowered by life, hopeless or helpless. In his great love for us, Jesus promises us help. He promises us the Holy Spirit. He promises us one whose presence will comfort us. We have a helper, a comforter, and an advocate.

When we think about the Holy Spirit as "helper," it's easy to imagine that's only for our benefit. The Holy Spirit is OUR helper. But, this helper isn't simply someone who comes to lend assistance in our various tasks. While it certainly does mean that as well: the Spirit comes to give God's people the strength and energy to do what they have to do, to live for God and witness to his love in the world, even in the face of overwhelming circumstances. The Holy Spirit comes to help us, so that we might help others in service to God and God's purposes. ☒ Not only does Jesus give us the Holy Spirit as helper, but also as comforter. Comfort is a strange and wonderful thing, isn't it? Have you ever noticed how, when someone is deeply distressed, after a great sorrow or tragedy, the fact of having other people with them, hugging them and being alongside them, gives them strength to continue on? Outwardly, nothing has changed. The tragedy is still a tragedy. The tornado won't sweep back through and rebuild the houses; nor will the dead person be coming back. But the support of others changes our ability to cope

with disaster. It gives us strength. When Jesus promises to us the Spirit as comforter, what he has in mind is this kind of extra strength in the face of a special need.

But there is something quite different to this Spirit as well. What comes to mind when you hear the word "advocate"? Many people think of a lawyer. An advocate stands up in a court of law and explains to the judge or jury how things are from his or her client's point of view. The advocate pleads the case. More than a courtroom, this is what comes to my mind when I consider the word "advocate". An advocate is someone who pleads the case for another. Or more particularly, an advocate is one who gives voice to the voiceless.

Christ's promise to his disciples in that Upper Room so many years ago and to us today is that we will not be alone. We will not be abandoned or orphaned. Because Christ is sending to us an Advocate -- a voice, help, comfort, counsel, and hope. Through his Spirit, God will care for us, will offer hope when there is none to be found, help when we are helpless, comfort when we can find none, and life in the face of death. The Holy Spirit is Christ's gift to us. The Holy Spirit is God's presence in our lives. We can be assured that, even in the midst of often overpowering difficulties, we have a Father who loves us, a Saviour who triumphed over death, and the Holy Spirit "who has been called to our side;" an Advocate of life and love. Just like mom.