

## ***“Defended by the Holy Spirit”***

The disciples are with Jesus in the upper room. They’ve been with Him the whole time – from the baptism of John to now – the night in which He would be betrayed. It is the night in which Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper – giving the sacrament to His Church – and as always is the case – with the Supper comes catechesis.

St. John records this catechesis – as Jesus teaches His disciples – as He prepares them for what lies ahead. Soon He will be gone – bound and taken away, nailed to a cross, buried in a tomb, and eventually ascend into heaven.

They’ve sat at the feet of Jesus for three years – receiving His teaching – and showing over and over again, that they didn’t comprehend all that He said. They constantly needed to be reminded of many things. And now things are coming to a head. His disciples are troubled, afraid, forgetful, not understanding what must soon happen.

We are very much like these original 12 followers of Jesus. Like them, we need help – more specifically, we need “the Helper.” This is why Jesus promises to send “the Helper, the Holy Spirit” – so that you may have peace.

The same Holy Spirit poured out on the apostles on that first Pentecost is the same Holy Spirit that the Lord has poured out on you, you who desperately need His peace.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost – the sending of the Holy Spirit to gather His harvest of believers. Just as every Sunday is a little Easter (a celebration of the resurrection of our Lord) – so every Sunday is a little Pentecost.

Through the life-giving Word of God, preached into your ears – the Holy Spirit is given. Through the life-giving water and Word of Holy Baptism – the Holy Spirit is given. Through the Body and Blood of Jesus given to you in the Lord’s Supper – again, the Holy Spirit is given.

Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper.” The old translation is Paraclete – literally, “one called alongside.” The word was a technical word, used for one who was called to the side of the guilty one in order to defend them. That’s why it’s sometimes translated as “the Counselor” – as in, a legal counselor, or lawyer. Like a defense lawyer, the Holy Spirit is sent to defend you – to come alongside of you – to help you.

And whether you realize it, or not – you need His help – because, after all, you live 24/7/365 as if you are in a courtroom – always being accused – and always trying to justify yourself.

Your classmates judge you – you are always trying to make it up to your spouse for your failures – your boss says he could find enough evidence to fire you if he wasn’t so desperate for workers. That’s the way it goes for you – always on trail – always being accused – always under attack – always looking for a way out. You desperately need peace. You desperately need the Holy Spirit.

So Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to you – working through His Word and Sacraments – to give you peace. The Helper comes alongside of you as your defense attorney – but He doesn’t work the way we expect Him to work.

He doesn’t look for loopholes in God’s law to get you acquitted. He doesn’t use the law against God’s justice. No, He hasn’t come alongside to get you off the hook – rather, He comes to throw the Book at you.

God the Holy Spirit comes alongside and reminds you of all your rebellion against God – all your crimes laid out on the table – and then, clearly and boldly decrees the just penalty for your sin – God’s temporal and eternal punishment – and an everlasting sentence of death.

If you don’t believe you are a sinner, if you don’t confess your crimes – the Holy Spirit can’t help you. So that’s the first order of business – convicting you of your sin and it’s just penalty. But, you may wonder, how does that HELP me – how does that give me PEACE?

Having helped you to realize the dire condition you are in – leading you to plead “guilty” of all sins – the Holy Spirit throws Jesus at you. He comes alongside to teach and remind you of all that Jesus has done for you – and His words carry the authority of the Father and the Son – so when the Holy Spirit says you are forgiven, you are set free.

Jesus Christ has taken your place, taken your sins – and fulfills God’s justice by paying the penalty with His very own blood, giving His life into death, so that the wages of all your sin might be paid in full.

Because of Jesus Christ – God the Father declares you to be “not guilty.” You are free to go – free to live – all because Jesus has taken your sins and redeemed them by His blood. This is the sermon the Holy Spirit constantly preaches into your ears.

Jesus knows what lies ahead for Himself (His crucifixion and death) – and He knows what lies ahead for these 12 disciples, and for you. He warns that “the ruler of this world is coming” – referring to the devil who comes, seeking to devour the sinner.

He is like the prosecuting attorney – a stickler for the law, because it shows how you have utterly failed to do what your Father in heaven desires. He keeps presenting one piece of evidence after another – always on the attack, always accusing – not giving up until there is a guilty verdict.

Ironically the Holy Spirit makes the same arguments – that you are guilty – but the trial isn’t over. The devil wants it to stop right there – with you doomed to eternal destruction – but the Helper, the Holy Spirit, continues to defend you – setting before all in the courtroom the Gospel of Jesus Christ – that He has redeemed you by His blood.

Meanwhile the devil presents false testimony – spouting lies – all to distract the judge, the jury, and you, from Jesus. That’s the last thing he wants – for the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus to be made known, and applied.

So that you may be set free – free to live in peace – God the Holy Spirit continually comes to you – reminding you of all that Jesus has said and done, “for you.” Again here today, Christ’s baptismal forgiveness cleanses you from all iniquity. His Body and Blood releases you from the bondage of sin, and gives you peace.

“Peace I leave with you;” Jesus says, “my peace I give to you.” He sends the Holy Spirit to you today, and peace is yours, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.