

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, May 6th 2024

The Holy Spirit strengthens you

As we move from Easter toward Pentecost, our readings speak of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew that his disciples and each of us would face unjust hardships that would severely test our faith. Jesus knew that his disciples would not be able to withstand persecution on their own. Today's Gospel is Jesus' answer to these overwhelming challenges. He promises his disciples and now each of us with the Helper, the Paraclete - the Holy Spirit.

The mission of the disciples would be to witness to the Jewish leadership and to the rest of the world the truth of Jesus – precisely in the face of their opposition. But they are never left alone. The Paraclete empowers disciples to face trials.

Today's passage also hints at the persecution of those who believe in Jesus, not from outside the Church but from within. The hour is coming when people who kill you think they are offering worship to God. Jesus revealed a God who loved the world and every creature; he had no favorites because everyone, without exception, was his favorite. But people who are driven by selfishness want a God who favors them; they want their God to be against those they oppose. They prefer to believe in this God of their choice, and they act with violence even as they quote the Word of God to defend that God of their choice.

This can be the most disheartening experience for the faithful in the Church – to have such scandalous behaviors within the Church. The numerous scandals within the Church and divisions on account of liturgical traditions cut deep into the body of Christ. Many members of this body are no longer driven by the command of love, but by hatred and desires for power. This has led many to lose hope, abandon their faith and leave the Church.

John was faced with this problem in his community. Therefore, he writes to his readers and listeners – reminding them that the Lord had indeed foreseen this and, therefore, promised us his Paraclete. This is the role of the Holy Spirit – to strengthen us when our faith is shaken to profess like St. Paul: I believe and “proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”

Lord, our God, if we really believe in you and your Son, we cannot be but witnesses. Send us your Spirit, that we may stand up for love and our neighbours' rights.