

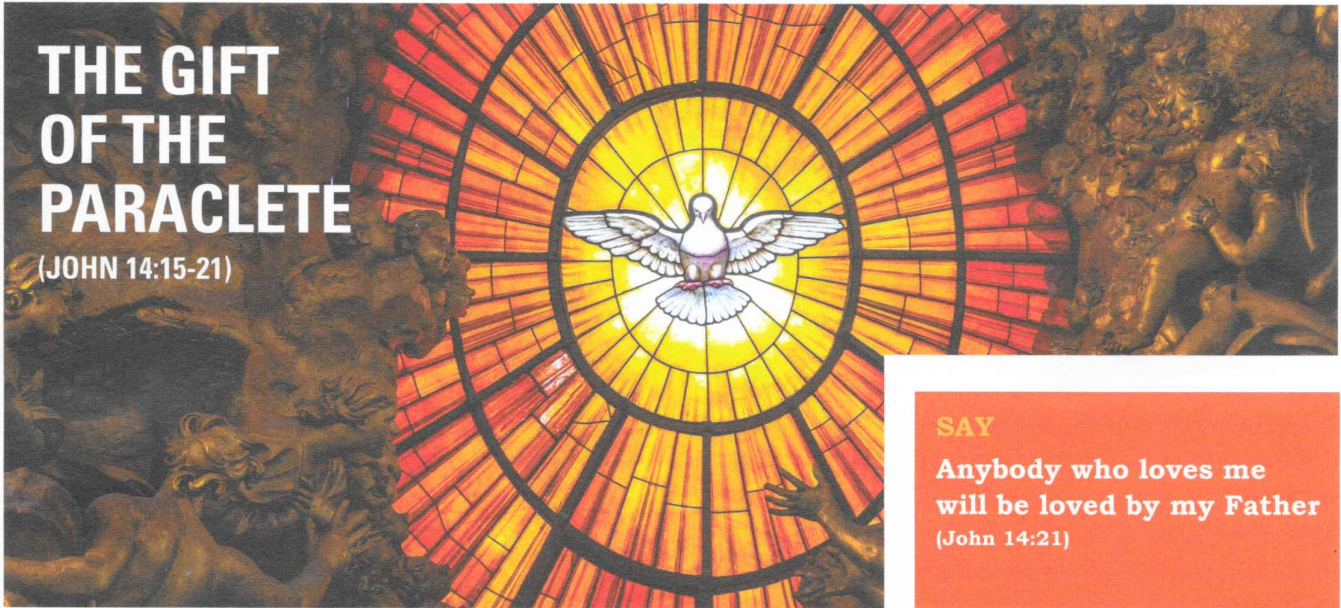
Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 2

THE GIFT OF THE PARACLETE

(JOHN 14:15-21)



Detail from the Throne of St Peter in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome

Our Gospel passage today focuses on Jesus' imminent departure. However, the end of his physical presence will not mean the conclusion of his being with his disciples.

What Jesus has done for his followers, praying for them and revealing the Father, will continue through the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who will be given as part of Jesus' being glorified at his hour. The Spirit will communicate truth, and thus be the ongoing presence of God in the world. Jesus' leaving should therefore not be a source of sorrow or grief, but rather the beginning of a new age which will be marked by the gift of the Paraclete: by love, a theme which runs right through our Gospel extract; this will be shown in the keeping of Jesus' commandments and the promise of a future time when the Son and the Father will dwell with the disciples.

The followers of Jesus will experience this ongoing presence within the worshipping community, especially in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. Those who believe, love and keep the commandments of Jesus will experience the ongoing presence of Jesus, who is absent, through the presence within and among them of the Paraclete. ■

REFLECT

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? All of us would, no doubt, answer such a question with a resounding Yes! We believe in the third person of the Blessed Trinity. Each time we recite the Creed, we say, "I believe in the Holy Spirit". But if someone asks us if we believe in the Holy Spirit as something (or someone) real in our everyday lives, our reply might be rather less certain. And if the question were put in such a way that we had to consider the Spirit as the ongoing presence of Jesus in our lives as individual disciples and in the community

of the Church, the people of God, then we might have to ask for a little time to consider an angle which we might well not have thought of properly.

The Gospel of John may well appear attractive and spiritual, but it is no less demanding on our beliefs. It challenges our religious outlook in a way that the Synoptic Gospels perhaps do not. It emphasises our personal relationship with Jesus and does not allow us the escape route of activism, where we could think that being a disciple is primarily a matter of doing, of performing good

SAY

Anybody who loves me
will be loved by my Father
(John 14:21)

LEARN

The Paraclete/Advocate is John's name for the Holy Spirit.

The handing over of the Spirit is the final act in the hour of Jesus' glorification.

The Paraclete continues Jesus' revealing presence and work in the world.

DO

Think about the penance you decided to practise during Lent: did it bring you closer to Jesus? If it proved to be an endurance test, then consider what might be more beneficial to you spiritually.

works of one sort or another, or of observing certain moral norms. Jesus promises another Advocate, another Paraclete, who will perpetuate Jesus' presence in the world. The Paraclete will unfold to later generations the riches of Jesus' teaching. If we believe, love and keep Jesus' commandments, then we will experience the presence of the absent Jesus through the presence of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. Do you believe this? Does it seem too good to be true? Or are you perhaps afraid of the consequences for your daily life? Would that bring Jesus rather too close? ■