

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

What is the Holy Spirit's favorite hymn?

A: Breathe on me Breath of God

If the Holy Spirit had earthly employment, what would it be?

A: Public defender

So, maybe some of you know this one...

What footwear is used by the Holy Spirit?

A: Pair of cleat(s)

In today's Gospel, Jesus is preparing his disciples for the time after his ascension.

(Ascension Day is Thursday)

He is teaching them how his resurrection from the dead will be giving them – and us – life, too.

But it means big changes.

He will be present with them in a new way – not face-to-face as they have known him up to now.

He will still be present physically, but in a new way.

He will be present through the Holy Spirit and the water of Baptism,

- the oil of anointing and the laying on of hands
- the bread and wine of Communion,
- and the body of baptized believers called the church.

“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them

Jesus promises to be present with the Father and the Holy Spirit in each faithful Christian, guiding our thoughts and actions to keep God's Word.

But the Advocate [Comforter, Paraclete], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

The Greek word Parakletos literally means "summoned to one's side".

If I am walking and twist my ankle, I might summon someone to my side to offer assistance.

In a courtroom, I would summon an advocate to be beside me for my defense.

If I face a difficult task, I might call for help from others.

Jesus and the Father

send their Holy Spirit – their divine breath of life – to be at our side, to accompany us as we live as Jesus' disciples now.

Instead of being only outside of us, God is now inside us by the Holy Spirit.

As Jesus is talking with his disciples, he is still with them – outside them, facing them.

He will soon leave them to ascend to the Father –to take his place of authority at the Father's side.

On Pentecost, he will send the Holy Spirit with power to dwell in them.

We have the benefit of knowing the Pentecost story. We know how it turns out.

But the disciples did not – they were still in the dark – still reeling from the truth that Jesus rose from the dead and trying to figure out what that means.

Most of us can probably relate to the feeling of knowing that something important is going to happen, but not knowing exactly what, or how, or when.

When I was a child, there were times when my mother would say, “Your birthday is coming soon and we are going to do something special to celebrate.”

Now, I did not have a good concept of “soon”, and I knew that special plans could happen on a day other than my birthday – the weekend before or after, for example.

So, I did not know what the surprise would be, or when it would happen.

I had to trust that it would, when the time was right, and that it was something I would enjoy.

But until the day came, I was living in anticipation, imagining what it might be, excited and impatient, and maybe a little scared that I would not like it.

Knowing the disciples as he did, Jesus understood that they needed some preparation, some clues as to what was happening, even though they had to trust for most of it.

And some things just have to be experienced. So, he did not explain about the loud noise and the fire and the tongues that they would experience.

Nor did my mother explain to me the gravitational dynamics of roller coasters.

My first ride had simply to be experienced.

Jesus said to his disciples, *If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.* ²⁹And now I

have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.”

Jesus is patient with our unbelief and gives us experiences of his presence to help us believe. That is what the Sacraments are meant to do and why they are so important in the Christian life. They are physical, tangible experiences connected to God’s Holy Word which together give us forgiveness of our sins, life, and salvation.

The Sacraments—Baptism, absolution, Communion, and the preaching -- create the community of the Church and they create faith in us. Thus, collectively, they are referred to as the Means of Grace.

These are the means by which the Holy Spirit makes the presence of the risen Lord Jesus real for us.

They are the fuel for the fire of our faith in which Christ sends us out into the world to live.

When we know ourselves to be sinners forgiven by Christ; When we know the freedom of living in his grace and having the hope of our own resurrection from the dead,

Then we can engage others in conversation

without confusing faith and politics,

without demanding that others agree with us,

because we can simply point to Jesus who died and rose from the dead to bring God’s reconciling peace to the world.

Sometimes, it is easier to have political opinions than it is to share our faith in Jesus.

But truly, God does not care about our political views – God does care about our faith and our obedience to his Word.

God does care that everyone know his love and that everyone who believes in Jesus and lives in him will have peace.

Like my birthday, the Day of Christ's return is soon, but we don't know exactly when, or how, or what.

The Holy Spirit walks beside us to help us remain faithful and to be patient.

No pair of cleats can help us cling to the ground of our faith as well as the Holy Spirit, the Paraklete does.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!