

*Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him.*

If we learn to live in the Spirit, then we will be true followers of Christ.

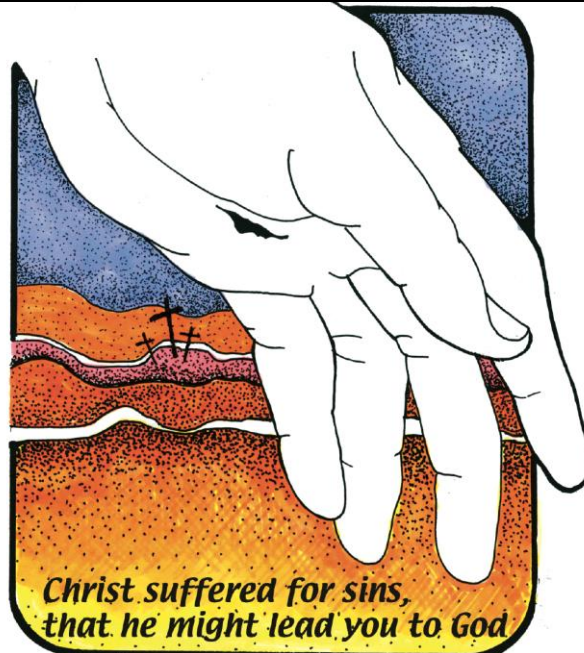
In today's scripture reading, the Lord gives three promises of fidelity to the Apostles and to each of us.

"I will send you another Advocate" (some translations say Counselor or Paraclete). The Lord is speaking, of course, of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we see ads for expensive items that carry a disclaimer that say "batteries are not included." Jesus did not give us a call to conversion, a way to live our life, only to say, "By the way, you're on your own; batteries not included." Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to be the energy and staying power in our life of faith. That is why, in our first reading, the Apostles were sent to the people of Samaria to give them the Holy Spirit so that their faith would not depend on temporary emotion. The Holy Spirit is manifested not primarily in extraordinary gifts but in the ordinary gifts of fidelity, prayer and conscience that enable us to live out our faith day by day.

"I will not leave you orphans. I will come back for you." Remember Jesus spoke these words at the Last Supper. Jesus is referring to His return at Easter. To us today, this promise of the Lord is kept in the Eucharist when Jesus comes to us in His Risen Presence under the form of bread and wine to be our strength and to give us a pledge of eternal life with Him. The Eucharist is Jesus' fulfillment of that promise to us. Because of the Eucharist, we are not orphans, never alone, no matter what we may face. In the gift of the Eucharist is where Jesus is with us.

"If you keep My commandments, My Father and I will reveal Ourselves to you and come to you." The presence of Christ becomes more vivid to us as we follow scripture. Our failure to follow the Word of God is like a spiritual tumor or spiritual cataract where our faith is obstructed. As we cleanse and clarify our life, we start to experience the presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways. The Lord gives this promise not only to the Apostles but to the Church as a whole. We need to make sure that our life is faithful to Jesus.



We have three promises of Jesus that are fundamental to Christian spirituality and to the life of the Church. First, the promise of the Holy Spirit to energize and sustain our fidelity to Christ. Second, the promise of Jesus to return to the Apostles at Easter and to us in the Eucharist. Third, the promise of sharing God's life more powerfully now and forever as we cleanse and clarify our lives.

We will celebrate the fulfillment of these promises in the next few weeks; first, we have the Ascension. After that is Pentecost with the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is followed by Trinity Sunday, the feast of the mysterious life of God in which we can take part. Last comes Corpus Christi, the feast of the Eucharist.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives every one of us the promise of a magnificent spiritual life and destiny and, as the next four Sundays will show, with the promises of Jesus "the batteries are included."

