

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 14, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows Him. But you know Him, because He remains with you, and will be in you.” (John 14:16-17)

In the selection of Saint John’s Gospel which we heard proclaimed, Jesus refers to the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Truth. This is an important revelation which Jesus is declaring to His Apostles and to later generations, such as ours. Jesus will not leave His Church orphaned. He will provide His Bride (His Church) with His Spirit of Truth. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit is proclaimed by Jesus to be the Spirit of Truth, thereby leading us into a deeper understanding of the profound meaning of Jesus’ salvific Passion. Furthermore, the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, slowly began to understand that found within Jesus’ pledge was another truth. It was the knowledge that the Holy Spirit is the Christian fulfillment to the Eschatological meaning of Hope.

The statement of the Holy Spirit being the fulfillment of the “Christian Eschatological meaning of Hope” may, at first glance, seem a bit too theologically bookish. One of the beautiful realities we have as the Catholic Church is our vast intellectual history. It is a history littered with many of the greatest minds who have ever lived. Their voluminous writings, adding to the theology of God, would fill multiple libraries. To allow for these great thinkers to fully express their theological statements as clearly as possible, new words had to be formed. Although their terms, as we first encounter them, may seem too lofty for us, once explained, they may well be as familiar to you as the back of your hand.

As Christianity began to be proclaimed to the non-Jewish majority found within the Roman Empire, it found an eager audience. Various philosophies had been developed which questioned the nature of a man’s life. These same lives which had been guided, since childhood, by pagan myths presenting gods and goddesses who displayed many of the same, if not worse, behaviors which they were encountering daily in their fellow citizens. Whether one was a slave owning landowner or the slave who worked the land, many knew that only a few individuals were chosen specifically by the gods and goddesses to be either punished or rewarded. For most, their existence after death would be in no way more pleasant than their existence before death.

It is with the spread of Christianity that mankind is offered an alternative. Through Baptism, the lives of slave owner and the slave are transformed. They have both received the same Holy Spirit of God and are forever joined as brothers in His family. This notion is beautifully expressed in Saint Paul’s Letter to Philemon. They are not solely presented

a God, in the person of Jesus, who loved them to the point of dying for them. They are also presented a God, in the person of Jesus, who teaches them, through His life, how they too should live. And, in living a life most in accord with His, they too could merit an eternity within His Presence.

In the mid-19th century, Karl Marx would famously express a counter to this understanding of the Eschatological vision of Hope with the often quoted, depending upon translation, statement: "Religion is the opiate of the people." A sense of this line is still being expressed in our time. Modern man is living in a society which is removing God and His Presence. No longer valuing the universal Truth found in the Holy Spirit, man now negotiates truth as whatever I deem truth to be for me at this moment. Compounding this situation, our modern society has slowly begun to return to its ancient pagan roots with the expulsion of God and His presence from the community forum. Lacking the necessary moral guidance of Truth found through the Holy Spirit, we now worship the "new gods;" the cults of celebrities, sports figures and entertainers. Modern man, lacking the Holy Spirit's gentle reminder of the meaning of the death of Jesus, has forgotten the importance of how to live a life in union with Jesus. In essence, we have returned, many ways, to the hopelessness found in the populace of Rome that early Christianity worked so diligently to eradicate through its preaching, teaching and witness. The Hope offered by the Holy Spirit and gained through Christianity is man's antidote for the perpetual restlessness and hopelessness that plagues all of mankind's history as a community and as individuals.