

**Sunday, 17 May 2020**

**First Reading: Acts of the Apostles (8:5-8, 14-17)**

**Second Reading: First Letter of Peter (3:15-18)**

**Gospel: John 14:15-21**

*Jesus said to his disciples:*

*"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.*

*"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."*

**Homily for Sunday, 17 May 2020**

**Fr John Petrulis**

Those words of Jesus that he will not leave us to fend for ourselves in our own struggle are so much what we need to know at this time, not to be left, or not to leave another in the pain of what they are going through. We hear that an advocate will come and when we think about that word advocate, we are reminded that it is one who will stand by another and speak for that one who can't speak for themselves, stand by and try and gather the resources for the one who can't seem to access them by themselves. The advocate who comes to comfort, encourage and be with. At the heart of that advocacy that Jesus says he will send is the meaning of the word advocate – the one who answers the cry. We see this in a mother or a father answering the cry of a little one when distressed, holding that little one in comfort. It is also like our Sacred Heart Mission here in St Kilda where people are literally hungry and seeking out a regular meal. There are hundreds of meals being handed out from our Grey Street entrance because we can't gather for our usual meal in the dining hall but we have found a way to answer that cry of hunger, to also greet people with a great sense of welcome and try and engage all those in need.

We have people in our own families and our own neighbourhood who are looking more anxious at this time as the journey continues, as we persevere through a long journey, a longer journey than maybe we expected. There is no instant cure to the virus and we can sense in some of our own family members an anxiousness or a quiet, unexpressed cry by the way they look or by their behaviour and our call to be their advocate. When Jesus says, 'I'm going to send another advocate', he is saying I want you to be my heart, another Jesus in the world, by the way you are uniquely placed and with your unique gifts, your unique time, to be that other advocate, another one of my heart in the world. That in and through your particular circumstance, my call to each one of you is to be the one who responds to the cry of the other in the best way you can. We may not have all the answers, we may not have all the resources, yet the desire of our heart to be for the other and do our best is where the Spirit moves. The Early Church didn't have everything together or worked out before they reached out, as we hear in our first reading today, Phillip goes forth into new territory among the Samaritans and he just tries to be what Jesus was: a healing presence. People gathered around him and they wanted to be baptised in that Spirit and the Spirit came down upon the people there. Their hearts were opened by the witness of Phillip and our hearts are called to be like Phillip, to be that other advocate, to be that heart of Jesus.

We also hear that the Spirit comes to bring a new imagination, a wider Spirit and a Spirit of truth. Such as in these days in our church where we've experienced the findings of the Royal Commission, some received only last week which we are still digesting. The Spirit comes not to just maintain a rigid, religious structure of a church but comes to renew us to be the heart of Jesus, to be confronted by our lack of living the truth yet always giving us the encouragement that we can begin again and have a more clear direct way to reveal the Spirit and the heart of Jesus. As Carlo Caretto, one of our great spiritual writers in the church says, the church can be the cross on which Jesus is crucified and some of the structures, and, as we know, the cover-up of things, need to be renewed in the heart of Jesus. We need to be that other advocate of his Spirit for his church. At this time of the Corona virus we are called, very directly to focus on the core things that will reveal the heart of Jesus in our down-to-earth compassion, to reveal that Jesus' Spirit is not a ghost, or a vague Spirit but coming in and through our particular time and through our humanity as we entrust it in faith. Our call is to keep on knowing that the Spirit is big, it's generous, it's constant, it is loving, it is of the truth and it is calling us to surrender into it, and not trying to be winners on our own bat but to surrender to that Spirit that makes all the difference to our world. I finish with some beautiful words from the great poet, Rainer Maria Rilke about being defeated by something greater that brings life:

*What we choose to fight is so tiny.  
What fights with us is so great.  
If only we would let ourselves be dominated,  
as things do by some immense storm,  
we would become strong too and not need names.  
When we win, it's with small things  
and the triumph itself makes us small.  
What is extraordinary and eternal  
[What is really of the advocate, the Spirit]  
does not want to be bent by us.  
This is how one grows by being defeated decisively  
by constantly greater beings.*

By that constantly greater Spirit in us, calling us to be reunited evermore in this world at this time  
And evermore focused in loving service.