



Scripture: John 16

Instructions: On the first day you pray with this guide, use the whole chapter for your prayer time. Then, highlight the sections, verses, or even phrases that strike you and spend subsequent days going more in-depth into those passages: why is God calling you to focus your attention there? Let these words sit with you even after your prayer time, and let God continue to speak to you through them throughout your day.

Reflection from Archbishop Aquila:

You can watch Archbishop's video reflections at archden.org/easter2021

As I travel around the Archdiocese of Denver and speak with many Catholics, especially with young people, who tend to be more blunt, I will sometimes hear a common refrain, “Archbishop, it would be so easy to believe if Jesus had come today. If we could just see him do miracles and preach, it would be so much easier than having to believe in something that happened in the past.”

I am, undoubtedly, sympathetic to their concern. Faith is no easy matter! It requires trust and a decision to believe in Jesus. These feelings are also likely exacerbated by modern ideologies like scientism and empiricism which think that if science cannot verify it or if the senses cannot apprehend it, it cannot be true.

Jesus actually addressed their struggle in chapter sixteen of John’s Gospel, where he said, “I tell you the truth, it is better for you that I go.” (v. 7). Let’s just pause there and consider what a strange statement this is. Jesus is saying to his apostles that it is better that he goes to his death and eventually rise and ascend to the Father, than to remain on Earth. How can this be?

He explains, “If I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you. But if I go, I will send

him to you," (v. 7). There's the punchline. When Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, he will be able to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to all of us.

Jesus' mission is not complete until this point. The purpose of him coming, to save us and bring us "life to the full" (John 10:10) is not fulfilled until he sends the Advocate. He comes to Earth, born of Mary, preaches, teaches, and heals, and then dies. He is raised from the dead and then after forty days, ascends back to the Father. Then, as a sign that he is seated in power at God's right hand, he sends the Advocate at Pentecost, which we will talk about more during week seven of this series of reflections.

This word "Advocate" is the same Greek root for the Latin word, "paracletus," or, as traditional Catholic prayers in English render it, "Paraclete." The word has a dual meaning; it refers to someone who would help you legally, in court, like a lawyer, but also means something like "one who consoles."

Consider this for a moment: Jesus is saying, in the passage above, that the sending of the Holy Spirit, which he will accomplish fully at Pentecost, is a powerful enough reality, that it will make a big enough impact in the world, that it is better than his continued presence on Earth, walking around and conversing with us in his humanity.

This should make us think deeply about our relationship to the Holy Spirit and how much we allow our lives to be suffused by the indwelling of the Spirit given to us in Baptism and completed in Confirmation. The Holy Spirit is in you and I; and he can only work to the extent we invite and allow him to. Do we live this truth? Have we put our faith in the Holy Spirit? Do we allow him to "guide (us) to all truth?" Do we listen to what he is saying? Do we allow him to glorify God in our lives? Are we encountering there in our relationship with the Spirit a filling of our life such that it truly was better for Christ to go?

The role of the Holy Spirit in our lives is more important than ever today. The last words of Jesus from this chapter are powerful ones: "I have told you this so that you might have peace in me. In the world you will have trouble, but take courage, I have conquered the world" (v. 33). Today, this verse is more relevant than ever. We are living in a moment that requires increasingly heroic Catholicism even to live out the most fundamental of our beliefs and practices. Jesus promises, even in the midst of these extraordinary difficulties, first, peace, and also that, "no one will take your joy away from you" (v. 22).

This is a challenging reminder from Jesus that peace and joy are possible no matter what befalls us. I am reminded of the words of the great Christian apologist and writer, C.S. Lewis: "He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only." When St. Maximilian Kolbe was thrown with nine others into a 10x10 ft. starvation bunker at Auschwitz, it was reported that the cell was filled with the ten men singing

songs of praise to God together. Even as they grew weak with hunger, they continued to whisper hymns and prayers day and night. Father Kolbe's peace and joy were so evident, even in the midst of extraordinary suffering, that one of the SS guards even remarked, "This priest is a truly great man. We have never seen anyone like him."

It is easy to be happy when all of life's circumstances are going your way. What distinguishes the Christian is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that allows for peace and joy even when nothing else is.

God can only say what heroism might be required of all of us, as followers of Jesus Christ, in the coming years ahead as we continue to navigate a world that has increasingly lost its moral compass as it has removed Christ from the center. What we do know, however, is that God has always promised us peace, in the midst of trouble, and that, through the power of the Advocate, the consoler, he alone is more than enough. *God alone suffices.* – St. Teresa of Avila