

Related topics

For further study:

Holy Spirit; Christian witness; evangelisation; baptism; paschal mystery; symbols: cross, water, oil; laying on of hands

Closing Prayer

Faithful God,
who loves us in Christ Jesus,
send your Spirit of truth to dwell within us,
that we may always reject what is false,
live by the commands of Christ,
and be true to the love you have shown us.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

Opening prayers, Easter 6A²

CPL • LBC Year A Easter 6.odt • 2020-04-30

² *Opening prayers : scripture-related collects for the years A, B and C from the sacramentary* / International Commission on English in the Liturgy. – Norwich : Canterbury Press, 1999,

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

Principal Service readings

Acts 17.22-31	Paul's speech at the Areopagus
Psalms 66.7-18	Bless God, who refreshes us
1 Peter 3.13-22	Be ready to suffer for doing what is right
John 14.15-21	Jesus promises to send the Paraclete

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
speak to our hearts in the stillness,
keep us steadfast in the foundation that cannot be shaken,
lift up our eyes to behold the vision of your glory;
and perfect our faith, now and always. Amen.

Society of Saint Francis

Gospel Reading

The promise of the Holy Spirit

Jesus said to his disciples: ¹⁵'If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you for ever. ¹⁷This 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. ¹⁸I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. ¹⁹In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. ²¹They 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.'

John 14.15-21 NRSV¹

Comments and Questions

'If you love me, you will keep my commandments,' Jesus says. Love and obedience don't normally go together in our minds. We think of love as a voluntary thing rather than as a sense of duty. We could restate this saying as, 'When you keep my commandments, then I know that

¹ *New Revised Standard Version Bible* is copyright © 1989 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

you love me'. Why do we so rarely look at our love in terms of our obedience?

So, what are Jesus' commandments? In the Gospel of John they are as simple and profound as: 'Love one another' (John 13.34; cf. John 15.12). The two great commandments are to love God and to love one another (Mark 12.30-31). Loving God isn't ticking a box, it means wholehearted commitment, to love God with all your heart and mind and soul and strength. It is not an easy thing. Similarly, to love your neighbour as yourself is quite demanding.

The compassion and love of Jesus for his disciples shines through what he says. He knows the disciples will feel lost and abandoned. He knows they will long for his comforting presence and a return to how things used to be. He knows they will be lonely and bewildered. He needs to prepare them for his absence by assuring them of his indwelling in the midst of his absence.

And so he promises them 'another Advocate' – Jesus is the first advocate, the first defender. The Greek word, *Paraclete*, means 'someone called alongside' to help and assist. Commentators despair of finding the right English word for it. 'Comforter' would be helpful in its earlier sense of 'encourager' or 'strengtheners'. 'Advocate' is near in its idea of 'a legal friend'. John is thinking of a friend at court, but he fills it with specifically Christian content. The friend is someone who will do whatever is necessary for their best interests. One commentator (Barclay) sees it as a picture of someone who 'makes us able to cope' in any situation. In contrast to Jesus who is leaving them, this paraclete will be with them for ever. How do you think of the Holy Spirit?

When the disciples see Jesus again they will understand what he is saying about unity. 'On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you' (14.20). Jesus reminds his disciples that in order to know the truth of the Spirit, Jesus himself must be acknowledged and accepted. Jesus promises them a relationship with the Father similar to his own. Somehow, through their love, he will reveal himself to them, even when he has departed physically from them (14.21).

Quotations

1

Because the Christian God is not a lonely God, but rather a communion of three persons, faith leads human beings into the divine communion. One cannot, however, have a self-enclosed communion with the Triune God – a "foursome," as it were-- for the Christian God is not a private deity. Communion with this God is at once also communion with those others who have entrusted themselves in faith to the same God. Hence one and the same act of faith places a person into a new relationship both with God and with all others who stand in communion with God.

After our likeness: the church as the image of the Trinity / Miroslav Volf. 1997

2

The whole of the church calendar unveils the Trinity. The Father sends the Son at Advent and Christmas, and the Son manifests the glory of the Father during Epiphany. He offers himself as a perfect sacrifice to the Father on Good Friday, and the Father rewards his self-offering by raising him from the dead. Ascended to his Father, he received the Spirit, whom he pours out on the disciples.

Theopolitan liturgy / Peter Leithart. 2019

3

The doctrine of the Trinity means that relationship, that fellowship, that togetherness and sharing, that self-giving and other-centeredness are not afterthoughts with God, but the deepest truth about the being of God. The Father is not consumed with himself; he loves the Son and the Spirit. And the Son is not riddled with narcissism; he loves his Father and the Spirit. And the Spirit is not preoccupied with himself and his own glory; the Spirit loves the Father and the Son. Giving, not taking; other-centredness, not self-centredness; sharing, not hoarding are what fire the rockets of God and lie at the very centre of God's existence as Father, Son and Spirit.

Jesus and the undoing of Adam / C. Baxter Kruger. 2007