

HOMILY for 6th SUNDAY of EASTER – Year A

This Sunday's Gospel tells us how Jesus left with His disciples the gift of the Holy Spirit as He returned to God the Father. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story to share with you.

Arthur rubbed the old lamp he had purchased at a flea market, & sure enough, a genie appeared. "Thanks for setting me free," said the grateful spirit.

"Aren't you going to grant me a wish?" asked Arthur.

"Aren't you kidding?" answered the genie. "If I could grant wishes, would I have been in that lousy lamp all this time?"

That spirit is a bit grouchy, isn't it? Anyway, unlike that genie, the Holy Spirit will grant us all the wishes that our hearts would desire. It will take good care of us until the second coming of Jesus. That is why this Sunday's Gospel lets us know how Jesus left with us the Holy Spirit as following: "...I will ask the Father; & He will give you another Paraclete – to be with you always: the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot accept, since it neither sees Him nor recognizes Him; but you recognize Him because He remains with you & will be within you. I will not leave you orphaned; I will come back to you." So, as Jesus prepared to return to God the Father & completed His mission of salvation, He left with His disciples the best gift of all – the Holy Spirit/the third person of the Holy Trinity. For our Lord did not want to leave His disciples orphaned or make them feel abandoned in any way. He loved & cared deeply for them. Most importantly, He knew that He could entrust His disciples under the protection & care of the Holy Spirit without any worry at all. So, what is it about the Holy Spirit that made Jesus feel confident about its works & guidance for His disciples?

In case we do not remember what Jesus did during His ministry, I reminded us in last Sunday's Homily that Jesus drove evil spirits out of the possessed, healed the afflicted, & fed the hungry. Those great works are often the corporal works of mercy in our Catholic Tradition. The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines the works of mercy to be charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbor in one's spiritual & bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, & comforting are spiritual works of mercy, including forgiving & bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, & burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to Christian charity. It is also this work of justice that pleases God. In fact, this Sunday's First Reading tells us more about the corporal works of mercy as following, "...Without exception, the crowds that heard Philip & saw the miracles he performed attended closely to what he had to say. There were many who had unclean spirits, which came out shrieking loudly. Many others were paralytics or cripples, & these were cured. The rejoicing in that town rose to fever pitch." So, evidently the people of God back then were able to experience some healing works by the early disciples. They rejoiced & celebrated those amazing miracles.

But, those wonderful miracles, including the ones of Jesus & the Easter one, would not be able to happen without the help of the Holy Spirit. We often do not give the Holy Spirit enough credit for making all kinds of miracles happen in our world. But, the Holy Spirit usually works behind the scene to carry out God's will & do amazing things in our lives. The Holy Spirit helped God the Father create our wonderful universe. Then, the Holy Spirit ushered God the

Son into our world with the immaculate conception of Mary. During His ministry, Jesus did countless miracles with the help of the Holy Spirit. That is why, before His public ministry, Jesus underwent the baptism with John to be approved & backed up by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove. Next, the Holy Spirit helped Jesus feed the hungry with meager resources & heal the afflicted. In fact, the Holy Spirit had a hand in raising Jesus from the dead. Today's Second Reading confirms the work of the Holy Spirit as following, "...He [Christ] was put to death insofar as fleshly existence goes, but was given life in the realm of the Spirit." As you can see, the Holy Spirit was credited for bringing Christ back to life. Hence, it is understandable why Jesus wanted to entrust His disciples to the care & guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit surely has the great credential & solid background for our Lord Jesus to entrust His disciples to it. As I have explained above, the Holy Spirit was with God the Father to bring about our wonderful Creation. It has been with God the Son Jesus from the moment of His immaculate conception to help carry out the divine plan of salvation. It sure has helped Jesus perform all sorts of miracles, including the Easter miracle. Without the Holy Spirit, our Creation & Jesus' mission of salvation would have a tough time to come about. That is why Jesus had the utmost confidence in the Holy Spirit to guide His Church & look after His disciples. In fact, He often called on the Holy Spirit to help Him feed the hungry & heal the afflicted throughout His ministry. As Jesus returned to God the Father, His disciples followed His example & called on the Holy Spirit to help them carry on His mission of salvation & heal the suffering in their own ministry. We should follow their footsteps & call on the Holy Spirit to carry on Jesus' mission of salvation & bring healing to our broken world. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot be an effective Church & continue to do the great works of Jesus in this world.

My dear brothers & sisters, Jesus did not return to Heaven & leave His disciples to fend for themselves. Instead, He called on the Holy Spirit – one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity to entrust them to its care & guide them. For He knew that the Holy Spirit will bring all sorts of blessings & miracles as it did at the beginning of Creation & throughout His ministry. I hope that we would call on the Holy Spirit to show us the way to Heaven & bring us lots of miracles in our lives.