

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The Lord's great love for His disciples, and His great love for you, is shown in the Words of grace He spoke in the Upper Room. There, where He instituted the Sacrament of the Altar, where He washed the feet of His followers, there, where He would institute the Office of the Holy Ministry, there, there, where He would appear to them after His resurrection, there, where He would elicit from Thomas that great confession of faith, there, before He went to His arrest, trial and crucifixion, there He encouraged the disciples with Words of comfort, Words of Hope.

He was leaving them. His time with them had been short. And now He was going away. Where He went, they could not understand. Where He went, they could not follow. The Way He would go was the Way of Suffering, the Way of the Cross, the Way of the Tomb. Because He said these things, the Beloved Disciple records, sorrow filled their hearts.

He had become the center of their lives, because Christ is the object and center of all saving faith. If you are a Christian, He is the center of your life too. They trusted Him, they relied on Him, they followed Him, they kept His Word, because that's what faith does. He had kept the promise that the Name Immanuel makes – He had been God With Them. And He would still be Immanuel, God With Them, after He goes away. But He would be God With Them in a different way, very much the same way that He is God With You.

“It is to your advantage that I go away”, the Lord consoled His disciples. It is to your advantage that He did what He promised. It is to your advantage that He was falsely accused. It is to your advantage that He was arrested and crucified. For He was put to death for your transgressions. He was raised for your justification.

But His death and resurrection avail you nothing unless they are applied to you, personally and individually, until that wonderful miracle is made yours, until the forgiveness He won is your forgiveness, until the righteousness that is His is made yours, until the life that cannot be taken away is made your life. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, The Paraclete, The Person of the Holy Trinity our translation calls “The Helper”.

The Work of the Paraclete is to advocate for you and with you, to console you, to help you. The Scriptures are clear: It is He, the Paraclete, that calls you to faith by the Gospel. He enlightens you with His Gifts. He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps Her, the Church, with Jesus Christ in the One True Faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all sins to you and to all believers, and will at the Last Day raise up you and all the dead, and give to you and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

But to do His salvific work, to do the work appropriate to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, to sunder the Church from the fallen world, to separate the wheat from the chaff, to declare sinful men forgiven and set them apart as holy, first the Second Person of the Holy Trinity - God the Son - must go away. He must go the Way of the Cross. Then, in a great Divine Mystery, only then, will He send the Paraclete, the Helper, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit that proceeds from the Father and the Son. So the Son teaches the Twelve “Now I go away to Him who sent Me...”

But before He goes, before the scourge finds His Flesh, before He is nailed to the cross, before He fills the borrowed tomb, before He empties the sealed tomb, before He appears alive to them, before He bids Thomas touch His wounds, He teaches them, and He teaches you, the implications of the coming of the Paraclete. “When He has come”, your Lord teaches, “He will convict the world...”

That is the work of the Holy Spirit – to convict the world. For the world is what is left when the Church is set apart. And you must be one or the other, you cannot be both. You must either be the Church or the world. You must either have the Holy Spirit, or refuse Him. That is to say that you must be either saved or condemned. There is no in between.

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, the Lord teaches, because they do not believe in Him. They believe in angels. They believe in a devil. They believe in their own wisdom, their own power, their own autonomy, their own mental prowess, their own ethics, their own flexible morals. Perhaps you too have fallen into the trap. But to trust in oneself is to reject the God that made you. And so His Word holds no sway over such men. They simply don't care.

Fallen men live as if they themselves were God. They make their own rules, their own commands. So the Prophet writes that they teach the commandments of men, that their wise men will perish, that the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden. And the fulfilment of the Prophet's foretelling surrounds you.

The world is convicted of righteousness because the only One who is truly Righteous has gone to the Father. What remains are the fruits of the fall: unrighteousness. What remains is sinful flesh, the very flesh that has led you to break the Commandments of God. And the world is convicted of judgment, because the ruler of this world, the prince of the air, the hissing salesman of the Garden, is judged – and with him all that do his bidding, and with him all that sin.

But to you, O Baptized of Christ, to you, Beloved of God, to you, dear Christian, the Son of God sends the Paraclete, the Helper, the Holy Spirit. And that Spirit takes of what is Christ's and declares it to you. In the undivided Unity of the Holy Trinity, what He hears from the Father and the Son He speaks. He guides you into all Truth.

And He tells you the things to come. For by the Spirit you believe what the Scripture says. You believe that God took on Flesh and was made Man. You believe that He died for you, and rose from the dead. You believe that the Christian will suffer as he is surrounded by a fallen and sin-filled world. And you believe that your Lord will come again, to take His Church home.

Believing, your sins are forgiven. The Blood of Christ covers you. The Blood that you drink this day brings you that forgiveness and His everlasting life. Your sins are taken away, forgiven, forgotten, because of Christ. You see, it was to your advantage that He go away, that He come to you today.

Believing in Him, believing by the work of the Paraclete, you have righteousness, imputed righteousness, righteousness declared to be yours by the God who speaks and it is. For in that same upper room He breathed on them, and gave the men that He calls and ordains and sends the

power to forgive sins, His power, His forgiveness, bestowed through men and through Means, the Holy Gospel in all its forms.

And while the world is convicted of judgment, you have already been judged and found innocent in Christ. He served your sentence. He paid your price. He died your death. What remains for you is vindication, righteousness, joy, and a life that cannot be taken away.

It is to your advantage that He went away. He went away, but is still Emmanuel. For He sent the Paraclete, the Helper, who comes to you, you borne in the waters of Holy Baptism, filling you, bringing to you the implanted Word which is able to save your soul.

So the Words of Scripture are not sealed to you, for by the Spirit you see that these are they that testify of Him. For every good and perfect Gift is from above. So take and eat, take and drink of His heavenly Gifts, for your risen Lord is still God With You.

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