



# Living the Gospel



**SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER — May 9, 2010**

**Theme: "Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord, and my Father will love him and we will come to him"**

---

## **Gathering Prayer**

**All:** Ever-living God, help us to celebrate our joy in the resurrection of the Lord and to express in our lives the love we celebrate. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives, and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

## **Exploring the Word**

### **Gospel Reading: John 14:23-29**

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home in him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father's who sent me. <sup>25</sup> "These things I have spoken to you, while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, 'I go away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place, you may believe.

## **Gospel Notes**

**22-23.** It was commonly held by the Jews that when the Messiah came he would be revealed to the whole world as King and Savior. The Apostles take Jesus' words as a revelation of themselves alone, and they are puzzled. Hence the question from Judas Thaddeus. It is interesting to note how easy the Apostles' relations with our Lord are: they simply ask him about things they do not know and get him to clear up any doubts they have. This is a good example of how we should approach Jesus, who is also our Teacher and Friend.

Bible Ministry

Jesus' reply may seem evasive but in fact by referring to the form his manifestation takes, he explains why he does not reveal himself to the world: he makes himself known to him who loves him and keeps his commandments. God repeatedly revealed himself in the Old Testament and promised to dwell in the midst of his people (cf. Ex 29:45; Ezek 37: 26-27; etc.); but here Jesus speaks of a presence of God in person. St Paul refers to this presence when he asserts that each of us is a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 6:16-17). St Augustine, in reflecting on God's ineffable nearness in the soul, exclaims. "Late have I loved you, O beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you! You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself. I searched for you in the world outside myself... You were with me, but I was not with you. The beautiful things of this world kept me far from you and yet, if they had not been in you, they would have had no being at all. You called me; you cried aloud to me; you broke my barrier of deafness; you shone upon me; your radiance enveloped me; you cured my blindness" (*Confessions*, X, 27, 38).

Jesus is referring to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul renewed by grace: "our heart now needs to distinguish and adore each one of the divine Persons. The soul is, as it were, making a discovery in the supernatural life, like a child opening his eyes to the world about him. The soul spends time lovingly with the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and readily submits to the work of the life giving Paraclete, who gives himself to us with no merit on our part, bestowing his gifts and the supernatural virtues!" (J Escriva, *Friends of God*, 306).

**25-26.** Jesus has expounded his teaching very clearly, but the Apostles do not yet fully understand it; they will do so later on, when they receive the Holy Spirit who will guide them onto all truth (cf. Jn 16:13). "And so the Holy Spirit did teach them and remind them: he taught them what Christ had not said because they could not take it in, and he reminded them of what the Lord had taught and which, either because of the obscurity of the things or because of the dullness of their minds, they had not been able to retain" (Theophylact, *Enarratio in Evangelium Ioannis, ad loc*).

The word translated here as "bring to your remembrance" also includes the idea of "suggesting": the Holy Spirit will recall to the Apostles' memory what they had already heard Jesus say-and he will give them light to enable them to discover the depth and richness of everything they have seen and heard. Thus, "the Apostles handed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but with that fuller understanding which they, instructed by the glorious events of Christ (cf. Jn 2:22) and enlightened by the Spirit of truth, now enjoyed" (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 19).

"Christ has not left his followers without guidance in the task of understanding and living the Gospel. Before returning to his Father, he promised to send his Holy Spirit to the Church: 'But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you" (Jn 14:26).

"This same Spirit guides the successors of the Apostles, your bishops, united with the Bishop of Rome, to whom it was entrusted to preserve the

faith and to 'preach the Gospel to the whole creation' (Mk 16:15). Listen to their voices, for they bring you the word of the Lord" (John Paul II, *Homily at Knock Shrine*, 30 September 1979).

In the Gospels is consigned to writing, under the charism of divine inspiration, the Apostles' version of everything they had witnessed-and the understanding of it, which they obtained after Pentecost. So it is that these sacred writers "faithfully hand on what Jesus, the Son of God, while he lived among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation, until the day when he was taken up (cf. Acts 1:1-2)" (Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*, 19). This is why the Church so earnestly recommends the reading of the Sacred Scripture, particularly the Gospels. "How I wish your bearing and conversation were such that, on seeing or hearing you, people would say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ" (J. Escriva, *The Way*, 2).

**27.** Wishing a person peace was, and still is, the usual form of greeting among Jews and Arabs. It is the greeting that Jesus used, and which the Apostles continued to use, as we can see from their letters (cf. 1 Pet 1:3; 3 Jn: 15; Rom 1:7; etc.). The Church still uses it in liturgy: for example, before Communion the celebrant wishes those present peace, a condition for worthily sharing in the holy sacrifice (cf. Mt 5:23) and also a fruit of that sacrifice.

On our Lord's lips this common greeting acquires its deepest meaning; peace is one of the great messianic gifts (cf. Is 9:7; 48:18; Mic 5:5; Mt 10:22; Lk 2:14; 19:38). The peace which Jesus gives us completely transcends the peace of the world (cf. note on Mt 10: 34-37), which can be superficial and misleading and compatible with injustice. The peace of Christ is, above all, reconciliation of men with one another, it is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22-23); it is the "serenity of Mind, tranquillity of soul, simplicity of heart, a bond of love, a union of charity: no one can inherit God if he does not keep his testament of peace, or live in unity with Christ if he is separated from Christianity" (St Augustine, *De verbis Domini serm.*, 58).

"Christ 'is our peace' (Eph 2:1). And today and for ever he repeats to us: 'My peace I give you, my peace I leave with you'. [...] Never before in the history of mankind has peace been so much talked about and so ardently desired as in our day. [...] And yet again and again, one can see how peace is undermined and destroyed. [...] Peace is the result of many converging attitudes and realities; it is the product of moral concerns, of ethical principles based on the Gospel message and fortified by it. [...] In his message for the 1971 Day of Peace, my revered predecessor, that pilgrim for peace, Paul VI, said: 'True peace must be founded upon justice, upon a sense of the untouchable dignity of man, upon the recognition of an indelible and happy equality between men, upon the basic principle of human brotherhood, that is, of the respect and true love due to each man, because he is man'. This same message I affirmed in Mexico and Poland. I reaffirm it here in Ireland. Every human being has alienable rights that must be respected. Peace is threatened every time one of these rights is violated. The moral law, guardian of human rights, protector of the dignity

of man, cannot be set aside by any person or group, or by the State itself, for any cause, not even for security or in the interests of law and order. The law of God stands in judgment over all reasons of State. As long as injustices exist in any of the areas that touches upon the dignity of the human person, be it in the political, social or economical field, be it in the cultural or religious sphere, true peace will not exist. [...] Peace cannot be established by violence, peace can never flourish in a climate of terror, intimidation and death. It is Jesus himself who said, 'All who take the sword will perish by the sword' (Mt 26:52). This is the word of the God, and it commands this generation of violent men to desist from hatred and violence and to repent" (John PaulII *Homily at Drogheda*, 29 September 1979).

**28.** Jesus Christ, as Only-begotten Son of God, possesses divine glory for all eternity; but while he is on earth this glory is veiled and hidden behind his holy human nature (cf. 17:5; Phil 2:7). It only shows itself on a few occasions, such as when he performs miracles (cf. 2:11) or at the Transfiguration (cf. Mt 17:1-8 and par.). Now, through his death, resurrection and ascension into heaven Jesus will be glorified-in his body also-as he returns to the Father and enters into his glory. Therefore, his departure from this world should be a source of joy for his disciples; but they do not properly understand what he is saying, and they are saddened because they are more aware of the Master being physically separated from them than of the glory which awaits him.

When Jesus says that the Father is greater than he, he is thinking about his human nature; as man Jesus is going to be glorified, ascending as he does to the right hand of the Father. Jesus Christ "is equal to the Father in his divinity, less than the Father in his humanity" (*Athanasian Creed*). St Augustine exhorts us to "acknowledge the twofold nature of Christ-the divine by which he is equal to the Father, the human, by which he is less than the Father. But the one and the other are together not two, but one Christ' (*In Ioann. Evang.*, 78, 3). However, although the Father and the Son are equal in nature, eternity and dignity, our Lord's words can also be understood by taking 'greater' to refer to his origin: only the Father is "beginning without beginning", whereas the Son proceeds eternally from the Father by way of a generation which is also eternal. Jesus Christ is God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God (cf. Nicene Creed).

## **Gospel Reflection**

It seems hard for most of us to have the integrity to keep our own word and promises faithfully. Lo and behold, in this gospel Jesus takes this one step further: "Whoever loves me will keep *my* word..." In last Sunday's gospel Jesus admonished us to love not on our own terms but as he loves. This week he commands us to keep not our word but his word. If we have difficulty keeping our own word (and realistically, sometimes we do), how in the world can we be successful in keeping *Jesus'* word? Besides, Jesus' word is much more than simply what Jesus taught. It is he way he lived.

Jesus' words and deeds coalesce into the same reality, that is, a life of self-giving that brings salvation. It is the same life we are called to in this gospel.

This would seem a daunting task for us, and quite discouraging from the outset. However, we are not left powerless in the face of keeping Jesus' word. We are given the help of God's own presence. To enable us to keep his word, Jesus promised us a divine indwelling through which we are re-created as persons able to live and love as Jesus himself did. We are a new creation empowered to continue, in peace and fearlessness, the mission of Jesus in the world. To be created anew means that we share in the life of the risen Lord—in a very real way, we share in Jesus' identity. Indeed, this is the gift of baptism: that we are made members of his Body of Christ. Only because we share in Jesus' identity as members of his Body can we truly keep his word and carry on his saving mission. Keeping Jesus' word means that we open our hearts to his presence, allow him to change us, and grow in such a way that his integrity and identity are meshed with ours. Jesus' word is a promise of a new relationship with him and his Father, where God comes and dwells within us through the power of the Holy Spirit. We keep his word, therefore, when we embody in our living the fearlessness and peace of Jesus that are evidence of the presence of the Spirit. We keep his word when we respond to indwelling divine Love with self-giving as modeled by Jesus. The truth and power of the word come from within, and it is the truth and power of the Holy Spirit. We are fearless not because of our own power but because of the Spirit dwelling within us.

Our Christian understanding of love rests precisely in the breath of self-giving we are willing to offer. Keeping Jesus' word ultimately means that we make the entire Gospel our own. This is surely no small task! But the reward—God's indwelling that brings us new life—is not small either.

## **Living the Paschal Mystery**

Living the Paschal mystery is as demanding as loving with the same self-sacrifice as Jesus and as easy as responding to God's indwelling as an intimate Friend who is always with us, never forsakes us, and at all times is there for us with care and strength.

These Sundays before Pentecost when we celebrate the gift of the Spirit are so important for our daily Christian living: they remind us that as disciples we never have to feel like the whole task of living the gospel falls on our shoulders alone. God is always present, dwelling within us, to give us the strength we need to be faithful to Jesus' commands. Only in this way can our everyday lives be fruitful, can we keep Jesus' word as our own word.

## **New and Old Testament links**

## **First Reading — Acts 15: 1-2, 22-29**

<sup>1</sup> Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." <sup>2</sup> Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question. <sup>22</sup> Then the apostles and presbyters, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. <sup>23</sup> This is the letter delivered by them: "The apostles and the presbyters, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: greetings. <sup>24</sup> Since we have heard that some of our number (who went out) without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, <sup>25</sup> we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, <sup>26</sup> who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>27</sup> So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth: <sup>28</sup> 'It is the decision of the holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, <sup>29</sup> namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.'"

## **Responsorial Reading — Psalm 67: 2-3, 5, 6, 8**

<sup>2</sup> May God be gracious to us and bless us; may God's face shine upon us. Selah <sup>3</sup> So shall your rule be known upon the earth, your saving power among all the nations.

<sup>5</sup> May the nations be glad and shout for joy; for you govern the peoples justly, you guide the nations upon the earth. Selah <sup>6</sup> May the peoples praise you, God; may all the peoples praise you! ... <sup>8</sup> May God bless us still; that the ends of the earth may revere our God

## **Second Reading — Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23**

<sup>10</sup> He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. <sup>11</sup> It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. <sup>12</sup> It had a massive, high wall, with twelve gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, (the names) of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. <sup>13</sup> There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. <sup>14</sup> The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation, on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ...  
<sup>22</sup> I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. <sup>23</sup> The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb..

## **Catechism of the Catholic Church**

**692** When he proclaims and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus calls him the "Paraclete," literally, "he who is called to one's side," ad-vocatus.<sup>18</sup> "Paraclete" is commonly translated by "consoler," and Jesus is the first consoler.<sup>19</sup> The Lord also called the Holy Spirit "the Spirit of truth."<sup>20</sup>

**729** Only when the hour has arrived for his glorification does Jesus promise the coming of the Holy Spirit, since his Death and Resurrection will fulfill the promise made to the fathers.<sup>116</sup> The Spirit of truth, the other Paraclete, will be given by the Father in answer to Jesus' prayer; he will be sent by the Father in Jesus' name; and Jesus will send him from the Father's side, since he comes from the Father. The Holy Spirit will come and we shall know him; he will be with us for ever; he will remain with us. The Spirit will teach us everything, remind us of all that Christ said to us and bear witness to him. The Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth and will glorify Christ. He will prove the world wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment.

## **Sharing and Discussion**

1. Illustrate what it means to “keep” Jesus’ word?
2. What are some ways in which the Holy Spirit fulfills verse 26 in our lives today?
3. How is the peace Jesus gives, different than the peace the world gives?

## **Closing Prayer**

**All:** O my God, Trinity whom I adore, help me forget myself entirely so to establish myself in you, unmovable and peaceful as if my soul were already in eternity. May nothing be able to trouble my peace or make me leave you, O my unchanging God, but may each minute bring me more deeply into your mystery! Grant my soul peace. Make it your heaven, your beloved dwelling and the place of your rest. May I never abandon you there, but may I be there, whole and entire, completely vigilant in my faith, entirely adoring, and wholly given over to your creative action. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

**All:** Amen

**Saturday 10am - 12pm at Church of The Holy Cross (room #03-06)**

**Contacts:**

**George Chee:** [georgejc@gmail.com](mailto:georgejc@gmail.com)

**Anthony Lim :** [am32lim@singnet.com.sg](mailto:am32lim@singnet.com.sg)

**Ellic Hiu :** [etshiu@gmail.com](mailto:etshiu@gmail.com)

**The Navarre Bible – Commentaries;**

**Living Liturgy – Liturgical Ministry, The Liturgical Press;**

**Emmaus Journey – [www.emmausjourney.org](http://www.emmausjourney.org)**