

6th Sunday of Easter (A)

- All through these Sundays since Easter the liturgy has been celebrating, over & over again, one central Christian truth: that Christ is risen, alive, & still present with us.
- It has presented this central Christian truth especially by recalling the various appearances of the risen Christ to his disciples, because these appearances were in order to show that this resurrected Christ was indeed the same identical bodily, human Jesus that the disciples had known in life.
- They saw him, touched him, talked to him, & ate with him just as they had done before his death.
- But now, today, the liturgy begins to show us that Jesus will no longer be present with us in the physical, visible, tangible way that he has been with his disciples - they will need new eyes to see him.
- It is only those who love him will be able to experience Jesus as alive & life-giving.
- Jesus invites us into loving relationship with him, & whoever loves him cannot think of him as someone belonging to the past - his life is not a memory.
- Whoever loves Jesus remembers his teachings, obeys his commandments, & keeps assimilating the life of Jesus.
- John calls this the Spirit of truth.
- That is true precisely because Jesus becomes a force & a light that enables us to live in the truth.
- To accept Jesus in our lives leads us to the truth, no matter in what situation we may find ourselves in life.
- According to the promise of Jesus, "he lives in us & is in us".
- We listen to Jesus in our hearts, & he shines in the lives of those who follow his footsteps, with humility, confidence, & faith.
- The evangelist identifies the Spirit as the "Advocate", because now that Jesus is no longer physically with us he defends us from what can separate us from him. This Spirit is always with us.
- No one can kill the Spirit as they did Jesus.
- He will always be alive in the world.
- If we accept him in our lives we will not remain orphans or forsaken.
- This, from now on, is the all-important point: "In the realm of the spirit."
- Yes, the same, identical Jesus of Nazareth who lived & died in Israel two thousand years ago is still really & truly present with us, but only in the realm of the spirit, that is, only in & through the Holy Spirit.

- Jesus, now, has gone from the realm of physical reality, & the Holy Spirit moves to the forefront - not as another, separate, distinct reality on its own, but as the continuing presence of Jesus here & now in us & in the world.
- In today's gospel Jesus told the apostles, "I will come back to you."
- Well, Jesus has already come back, & he is present with us - not in body but in spirit, that is, in the Holy Spirit.
- What does all this mean to us, practically?
- What does it all mean for our everyday lives?
- The Second Vatican Council used the scriptural expression "the signs of the times." Hold on to that expression: "the signs of the times."
- The Council tells us that we have the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times, & of interpreting them in the light of the gospel.
- Therefore we need to be perceptive enough to recognize & understand the presence of the living Christ in the world in which we live - because it is in 'the signs of the times' . . . that the divine presence is disclosed.
- In the Holy Spirit, then, we need to nurture on earth all the values of human dignity, family life, & freedom - & indeed, all the good fruits of our human nature & our entire human enterprise because that is where the living Christ in his Spirit lives.
- What this means is that as Christians we do not hanker after the presence of Jesus in any physical way; we do not hanker after Jesus in physical appearances or apparitions, or even in interior, pious imaginings or emotional experiences; but rather we seek Jesus only in scrutinizing the signs of the times in the light of the gospel.
- Only in striving to see & judge everything that takes place in our lives & in our world with the mind & with the spirit of Jesus, will we be able to act according to the power & inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
- We really need to read the signs of the times & interpret them with the mind & spirit of Jesus within us & we are able to do just that, because, Jesus told us: "The Holy Spirit will remind you of all that I told you."
- It is only in this way that we find the resurrected Christ because it is only in the actual realities of human history that he is still, really & truly present with us, in spirit, in his Holy Spirit.
- We have not celebrated the Ascension, & yet all three readings speak of the Spirit - the same Spirit, who gave life to the resurrected Jesus, enlivens us, & who now strengthens, comforts, guides & inspires us.
- Life in the Spirit requires that we conform our lives to the commandments of God, not in a legalistic or constraining way but out of love; the love that comes to us through the Spirit will then overflow into the lives of others, & we will be agents/instruments of God's love in the world.