

Sixth Sunday of Easter



Prayer before the Heavenly City

Lord of all,
through John's words, we see your
heavenly city
whose foundation is laid
on the strength of your apostles,
and the tribes of Israel
whom you first called into covenant.

Take us into your service as you
took them
to proclaim your word of forgiveness,
redemption, and love to a broken world.
Let us announce your justice, your peace,
and your desire for unity
wherever there is injustice, conflict,
and division.

Bring us to greater knowledge of you
and of your wonderful works
so that we might praise you in all we do.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

May 9, 2010

The Work of the Advocate

Now, just two weeks before Pentecost, the Gospel turns to Jesus' promise that the Father will send an "Advocate," in Greek *paraklatos* or *Paraclete* (John 14:23-29). In John, this is a word used exclusively for the Holy Spirit and means "helper," "intercessor," "mediator," or "one called to the aid of someone else." The Advocate fulfills Jesus' promise a few verses earlier: "I will not leave you orphaned" (14:18). Rather, the presence of Jesus will continue as the Holy Spirit reveals and teaches all to the community of faith.

For most of us, what we know of the Holy Spirit is limited to what we learned at Confirmation. The Holy Spirit

gives gifts to strengthen our faith and guide the Church. And so it does. But Jesus' words tell us that the Spirit is the indwelling presence of God in the world whose very breath reveals the divine. It is the Spirit who gives peace and insight and whose gifts, freely given and accepted, build up the body of Christ. It is the Spirit who makes us accountable to the truth of God's word. (Jesus talks about the Spirit of truth in John 16:12.) Pray today for the peace of Christ and the grace to use your gifts for the good of all and for the glory of God.

This Week at Home



Monday, May 10

Blessed Damien Joseph de Veuster of Moloka'i

Damien of Moloka'i served the remote leper colony on the island of Moloka'i in Hawaii. In the nineteenth century, Hansen's disease (leprosy) was little known and very misunderstood. Though it is difficult to contract, its sufferers were often banished to live with others who had the disease. Damien volunteered to serve the colony and became an advocate for its residents. Eventually he contracted the disease and died from it. You can see his likeness in Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol, one of the two images representing the state of Hawaii.

Tuesday, May 11

Paul Converts His Jailer

Today, from Acts (16:22-34) we hear about the escape of Paul, Silas, and others from prison—one of the most intriguing stories of the early Church. The earthquake that sets them free is exciting, but it is the interaction between Paul and his jailer that offers a glimpse of the power of Paul's preaching. In one detail, after the jailer listens to the words of Paul and Silas, he takes them into his own house and binds up their wounds. Afterward he and his family are baptized. Paul's words were falling on good soil!

Wednesday, May 12

Saint Nereus and Saint Achilleus

Imagine having to stand up to your friends and coworkers to defend what you believed in your heart to be true. Saint Nereus and Saint Achilleus did exactly that. As members of the Roman guard, they had sworn allegiance to the emperor, but their path took them to Christ. Legend has it that they were baptized by Saint Peter himself. For their treason, they were beheaded around 100 AD, becoming two of the early martyrs of the Church.

Thursday, May 13

Ascension of the Lord

Ascension signals the beginning of a final period in Easter as we look forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In today's reading from Acts (1:1-11), we learn that just as he was about to ascend, Jesus told the disciples they would soon "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem . . . and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This command is our work now, just as it was the work of the disciples. We must hold onto our absolute trust that the Spirit of Jesus has come and is with us even now, giving grace to carry on until that day when we are all one in God.

Friday, May 14

Feast of Saint Matthias

Our reading in Acts today (1:15-17, 20-26) tells how the apostles chose someone to take the place of Judas. Matthias is one among many who were with the apostles from the beginning until the Ascension. The apostles prayed over two of these men, and Matthias was chosen. It is striking that we never hear of him again. Apparently, he returned to his work of witnessing to the Good News.

Saturday, May 15

Saint Isidore

Isidore was a farm laborer who lived from about 1070 to 1130 in Madrid, Spain. Greatly devoted to his faith, he attended Mass each morning, helped the poor, and cared for animals. When fellow workers complained that he spent too much time away from the fields, a surprise inspection showed that, because of his great love, angels had helped with his plowing. It is no surprise that Isidore is the patron saint of farmers and rural communities. His wife, Mary de la Cabeza, is also a saint.



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