

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 14:23

R⁷. Alleluia, alleluia.

Whoever loves me will keep my word, says the Lord,
and my Father will love him and we will come to him.

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Gospel

John 14:15-21; L55A

Jesus said to his disciples:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him.

But you know him, because he remains with you, and will be in you.

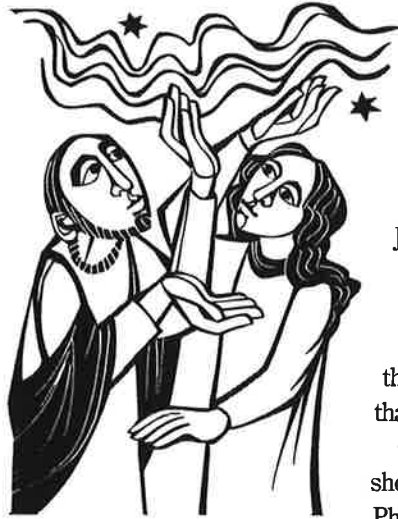
I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live.

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.

Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me.

And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.”



Reflecting on the Gospel

Self-will is mighty strong. Some children learn to say “No!” even before they say “Mama” or “Dada.” Self-will is a form of self-assertion whereby we establish boundaries around ourselves, determine our own destiny, protect ourselves from doing what we don’t want to do. When our self-will is overly strong and selfish, we rail against any rules and laws and commandments. We want to do this, not that. If we were the only person in the world, this behavior might be

OK. But we’re not the only person in the world. So from early on in our lives we learn the value of curbing our own selfish wills and choosing to behave in a manner that enhances the quality of life for all. In this gospel Jesus is telling his disciples to “keep my commandments.” He is shaping our self-wills in a way well beyond choosing simple actions. He is drawing us out of ourselves and our self-will into him and his self-giving.

There is more to what Jesus is saying than meets the eye. When Jesus says to keep *his* commandments as a sign of our love for him, he is not only speaking about simple laws or commands. He is saying that *if we love him, we will believe as he believed, live as he lived.* Loving Jesus as he asks requires us to *believe and live* in such a way that others *know* the resurrection is real, that Jesus is really present, that Jesus still cares for us deeply (“I will not leave you orphans”).

Our love for Jesus is shown in the same way as the early disciples showed their love—by practical doing in our everyday living. Like Philip and Peter and John (see first reading), we are to proclaim the living Christ by the way we heal hurts in others; bring a caring touch to those who are ailing in any way; strengthen those who are weak or paralyzed by fear, doubt, or selfishness; encourage those weighed down with too much stress, work, or indecision. All this is keeping Jesus’ commandments by living *his* way of life—a life characterized by deep care for others. The most encouraging aspect of this gospel is that Jesus even sends us the help we need to love, believe, and live in this way.

Jesus’ commandments entail much more than doing this or avoiding that. His commandments are to love as he loved, believe as he believed, live as he lived. His commandments are the most self-engaging and challenging of all! How comforting, then, when Jesus says “I will not leave you orphans.” No, we are not orphans: the risen Jesus comes to us. How? In “the Spirit of truth.”

Living the Paschal Mystery

So much of our life seems anything but connected to Jesus and expressive of our love for him. Our sheer busyness hardly leaves us with a moment to catch our breath, let alone be concerned about loving Jesus!

Loving Jesus doesn’t require that we pray all the time or that we are consciously aware of Jesus’ risen Presence. Loving Jesus is a simple matter of keeping *his* commandments—being gentle and reverent toward others, having a clear conscience, doing good (see second reading). For most of us we are already doing what we need to do to be good Christians; what more is needed is to recognize that these good actions are the way we keep *Jesus’* commandments and express our believing in him. In other words, his commandments are pretty simple to know: love as he loved, believe as he believed, be self-giving as he was, do the Father’s will as he did. Most of all, keeping his commandments means opening ourselves to the Spirit who dwells within us and makes us like the risen One.

Focusing the Gospel

Key words and phrases: keep my commandments, give you . . . the Spirit of truth, I will not leave you orphans, I live and you will live, the one who loves me

To the point: Jesus' commandments entail much more than doing this or avoiding that. His commandments are to love as he loved, believe as he believed, live as he lived. His commandments are the most self-engaging and challenging of all! How comforting, then, when Jesus says "I will not leave you orphans." No, we are not orphans: the risen Jesus comes to us. How? In "the Spirit of truth."

Connecting the Gospel

to the first reading: We are not only given the Spirit by the Father, we are also given the power to share that Spirit with others, as Peter and John went to Samaria to do.

to experience: Disease, war, natural disasters often leave many orphans. Our hearts instinctively go out to them. How comforting it is for us to hear that Jesus will not leave us orphans, but will remain with us to lead us, care for us, give us Life.

Connecting the Responsorial Psalm

to the readings: In these verses from Psalm 66 we continue our Easter celebration of Jesus' death and resurrection, the culmination of all God's "tremendous deeds" among us. We also celebrate the "tremendous deed" of the gift of the Spirit poured into our hearts and flowing out, as the readings indicate, into our actions. We have a great deal to sing about.

The readings remind us, however, that we are to do more than sing about God's redemptive acts. We are to witness to them with conviction and power (first reading) and with "gentleness and reverence" (second reading). We are to do good because of them, even if this brings us suffering (second reading). Above all we are to reveal what God has wrought for humankind by keeping Jesus' commandments (gospel). Just as God's saving actions are the cause of our joyful singing, may our actions be cause for the whole world to sing.

to psalmist preparation: This responsorial psalm reminds you that singing God's praises for the gift of redemption is not a private activity but a public proclamation. You invite "all on earth" to "hear" what you have to declare, to "come and see" what God has done, to join you in "glorious praise" of God. Your ministry, then, reaches far beyond the ears of the assembly gathered before you. Take some time this week to reflect on the awesome reach of your ministry and ask the Spirit to give you the capacity to meet it.

ASSEMBLY & FAITH-SHARING GROUPS

- I know I love Jesus when . . . I struggle to love Jesus when . . .
- I feel like an orphan when . . . Jesus comes to me by . . . and . . .
- Living Jesus' commandments demands that I . . .

PRESIDERS

I assure others that the Advocate is with them always in that . . .

DEACONS

My service ministry is a sign of Jesus' love for those in need when I . . .

HOSPITALITY MINISTERS

My manner of greeting those who gather communicates to them that the Spirit dwells in me and them when I . . .

MUSIC MINISTERS

My music ministry is most self-engaging and challenging when . . . I respond in love by . . .

ALTAR MINISTERS

My serving at the altar conveys that I am doing more than the task requires (fulfilling the "law") when I . . .

LECTORS

My proclamation is a witness to my loving, believing and living as Jesus did when I . . .

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION

The manner of my distributing Holy Communion is a proclamation of Jesus' love for each communicant when I . . .