

6th Sunday of Easter, Emmanuel, May 17, 2020

John 14:15-21

Susan Peyton

“he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth ” Amen.

Jesus is trying to tell his apostles a few more things before he leaves. Sometimes it's an uphill battle, as the apostles question him about everything. Today's reading doesn't have any of his apostles interrupting to ask him questions. Probably because bits of this reading go in circles or contradict other verses. Jesus is trying to reassure them that he will be around, just in another form. Saying that he will ask his Father to give them someone else. Not in human form, but the Holy Spirit. I tend to lump the Holy Spirit in with the other two parts of the Trinity, in the name of the Father, and son and Holy Spirit. In fact, perhaps the Holy Spirit kind of gets lost. Instead the Holy Spirit is sprinkled all through our Book of Common Prayer. The Holy Spirit has no boundaries, no form, both male and female, always there for all of us. The Holy Spirit has multiple roles: advocate, counselor, comforter, helper. The Holy Spirit may be bringing someone to Christ, helping as they read and interpret scripture. While the Holy Spirit is not seen, it has been depicted as wind, tongues of fire, and living water of baptism. And here at Emmanuel, we see the Holy Spirit as a Dove in two of our stained glass windows. When we gather to worship together, be sure to look at our stained glass windows. They are beautiful.

Most Episcopal services mention the Holy Spirit quite a bit. In this service of morning prayer, the prayer after the confession of sins, “by the power of the Holy Spirit, keep us in eternal life.” The Apostles Creed says Jesus was “conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit”. After the Lord's Prayer, in the Suffrages, we say, “sustain us with your Holy Spirit.” And one of the concluding sentences has “the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.” If I were to give all the examples of the Holy Spirit's actions in our prayer book, everyone would get a morning nap in. Only one more. Each Sunday when we gather in the church and have Holy Eucharist, as the elements are consecrated, the priest will say “Sanctify them by the Holy Spirit.”

Throughout the life of any Episcopalian, the Holy Spirit is present and active. But how do you explain the Holy Spirit. I decided to go to the source for an explanation of the Holy Spirit. If you are bored while waiting for our virtual coffee hour, go to the back of the Book of Common Prayer. You will find the section that tends to be used during confirmation class, the outline of faith, or catechism. On Page 852 is the question: What is the Holy Spirit? Paraphrasing the answers. The third Person of the Trinity, God at work in the world and in the Church even now, the giver of life, the One who spoke through the prophets, revealed as the Lord who leads us into all truth and enables us to grow in the likeness of Christ. We recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit when we confess Jesus Christ as Lord and are brought into love and harmony with God, with ourselves, with our neighbors, and with all creation. We understand the meaning of the Bible by the help of the Holy Spirit, who guides the Church in the true interpretation of the Scriptures. The Books of the New Testament are written with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In the Jewish tradition, there is a great word for Spirit. Ruach. Ruach is not a social distancing friendly word. But if you say it, it almost sounds like the wind, the spirit, our

breath. And Ruach hakodesh is Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit that steers you to a different college, that provides a gentle push to help with a decision. Sometimes just to know you are not alone. We usually talk about the Fruit of the spirit. There are also the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts. They are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. In today's world, most of those spiritual gifts are needed. Especially fortitude, having strength in the face of adversity or difficulty.

And perhaps this is the perfect time to ask the Holy Spirit to descend on us, as the Holy Spirit is with us. Amen.