

Counselor for Life
John 15:26-27; 16:4b-11
May 24, 2015 - Pentecost

When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you. Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

Many summer camps have a tradition of taking their young campers on a nighttime hike into the woods to spend a night under the stars. Because most of the young people have never been in the woods at night, the camp counselor usually gives them a short orientation lecture before they venture out.

A good counselor covers two main points. 1) Each person must stay with his or her assigned partner throughout the night. They are to look after each other and help each other. 2) If anyone should get lost, they only have to look to the sky to find their way. If the campers can locate the North Star, they will have some sense of direction. If the sky is cloud-covered, they can usually see the lights from a shopping mall or a nearby town reflecting off the clouds.

We live in a world where many people are looking for a way to find their way through life. Some people turn to materialism, trying to gather more and more things. Some strain to attain more and more money. Others go after more and more power. Yet, chasing after these things will always leave a person feeling abandoned, empty, afraid, and lost.

Fear is common to all people. Have you every worked in a nursery or daycare center? If so, then you have probably seen a look of real fear on the face of a young child as the parent begins to leave. The child starts to feel abandonment and runs after their parent.

However, it isn't only children who can feel abandoned, empty, frightened, and lost. Adults are subject to these same feelings. Someone sees their marriage falling apart. Someone, who lived 50, 60, or 70 years in one house, suddenly finds himself or herself living in a nursing home. Someone, who was hardly ever sick their whole life, learns they have cancer. People by the hundreds, thousands, and perhaps millions feel abandoned, empty, frightened, and lost. To whom do they turn when they need a counselor?

Many people look for counsel and guidance from the mindset of the world. They take

their cue from what they see and hear.

Some years ago, musicians noted that errand boys in a certain part of London all whistled out of tune as they went about their work. It was talked about and someone suggested that it was because the bells of Westminster were slightly out of tune. Something had gone wrong with the chimes and they were discordant. The boys didn't know there was anything wrong with the bells, and quite unconsciously they had copied their pitch.

Some people look at the world and try to copy what they see as success. They don't realize that things like money, material objects, and immoral pleasures will not remove feelings of abandonment, emptiness, fear, and lostness.

Other people recognize these are not the answer, so they turn to another kind of counselor. I once saw a TV infomercial in which a pitch man explained that he could counsel people about their lives by connecting them with their former lives – right over the phone. To find the solution to all your problems, all you need to do was call his 1-900 number.

The small print at the bottom of the screen read: "Only \$4,95 per minute, seven minute minimum," Then came the real kicker: "All calls are for entertainment purposes only." I know I can sometimes be rather skeptical, but I don't think entertainment is the kind of counsel that will solve serious life problems.

Jesus sent a counselor. However Jesus' mindset is not the mindset of the world. He doesn't glorify worldly success. He doesn't offer us a counselor for entertainment purposes only.

So, who is this counselor? The Greek word used in the text is $\text{ἄλλοτρωσ} \cdot \text{ἄγγελο}$ (paraklōs), from which we get the English word "paraclete." A paraclete is a helper, an intercessor, a mediator, or a counselor. Paraclete can also be used in a legal sense to refer to someone who pleads a defense for another. All those things are the work of the Holy Spirit.

The counselor Jesus sent, the Holy Spirit, came with a special mission. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to reprimand the world in three areas: sin, righteousness, and judgment.

The Holy Spirit rebukes the world on account of sin; not the sins that might come to mind, but the sin of rejecting Jesus as Savior. After all, that is the sin that leads to eternal condemnation. Paul told the Corinthians: *I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.* (1 Co 12:3 NIV).

The Holy Spirit rebukes the world with regard to righteousness, because the righteousness of the world is opposite and opposed to the righteousness of Christ. Romans chapter 3: *There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands,*

no one who seeks God. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Ro 3:10, 11, 18 NIV).

The Holy Spirit rebukes the world regarding the judgment which is coming. Not only the judgment against the world, but also the judgment against Satan. The Bible say: *Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done* (Ro 2:5-6 NIV).

However, rebuking is not the only mission of the Holy Spirit. For Christians, the Holy Spirit functions as a guide and counselor. He is with us as we struggle in a sinful world to live according to God's will. The Holy Spirit gives us strength and is always interceding for us before the Throne of the Father. Paul writes: *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will*

(Ro 8:26-27 NIV).

Sometimes the Holy Spirit works through a friend, a neighbor, or a pastor. I read a story about a pastor who went to the hospital to visit a couple of prospective members. The couple's new-born baby had just died, and the pastor wanted to comfort them.

The pastor told the couple, "I know how you feel." The young parents became noticeably upset at this, so the pastor continued, "My wife and I lost a baby, too." The couple was grateful for a comfort which could only come from someone who had been through the same experience. When the pastor finished the grave side service, the grieving mother said, "Thank you for entering into our sorrow with us."

The Holy Spirit brings this kind of comfort into our sorrows. Because of the life, suffering, and death of Jesus, the Holy Spirit understands not only our weaknesses but also our heartaches. He comforts us with the love and the promises of our Father.

On that first Christian Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples, they were so filled with power and praise they couldn't stop sharing their faith. When the Holy Spirit comes to us, we also cannot be stopped. The world may frown at us, Satan may growl and sneer, but we have the power of God because Jesus lives within us through the Holy Spirit.

Friends, we are unstoppable. God has not abandoned us. There is no need for us to feel empty, frightened, or lost. We have an Advocate. We have a Paraclete. We have a Comforter. We have a Guide. We have a Counselor. We have the Holy Spirit.