

Sixth Sunday of Easter  
May 26, 2019  
Fr. Rick Lorenz

## Homily

I'm in the army, and my unit is preparing a box of goodies for one of our soldiers who is deployed. We try to send something around the half-way point. We put in cookies, candies and books. Maybe they'll like what they get; if not, they can share their treats with their fellows. We include a picture of the company clerk. It shows him being recognized as "employee of the month"; one of our little jokes that's become a tradition. People add what they want: out of friendship if they're close, or empathy if they've deployed before. I write a note assuring them of my daily prayers for their divine protection. As the unit chaplain, or "padre," I've gladly accepted the responsibility to make it happen. It doesn't always feel like enough. Too late, I think of something that we should have sent. We had an end-of-the-year BBQ today, and I wish I had taken a photograph to send along as well.

In today's Gospel, Jesus refers to himself as having been sent. He says, "the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me." He's speaking to the disciples at the last supper, so his time is short. He was sent, but is going away. Soon he will be crucified, resurrected and ascended; glory upon glory returning him to the right hand of the Father, where "the glory of God is light, and its lamp is the Lamb." But all that lies in their future, hidden away.

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29  
Ps 67  
Rev 21:10-14, 22-23  
Jn 14:23-29

Written between the lines we can hear their objections and doubts. "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." And he promises a gift that is to come. Jesus is going, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you."

The catechism says that the sending of the Holy Spirit is a double-gift: "the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption (1848)." He reveals the truth about our sin, and also reminds us of our deliverance from sin. We see an example of this in the first reading. The apostles and the elders gathered together in Jerusalem for the first council of the Church. They had to decide whether new Christians needed to be circumcised, in keeping with the law given to Moses. But "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials." They would not have to be circumcised.

The Holy Spirit reveals the truth, but we're like AM radios: through us, the truth gets distorted. And even if we do remember the truth, we don't always choose it. Titus was spared from circumcision (Gal 2:3), but even with the council decision, Paul still had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). Maybe he regretted it later. The Galatians were considering accepting this yoke, so Paul rebuked them.

He assured them "that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16)."

Peter wasn't perfect either. He had received a vision that indicated that Gentiles were not unclean, that Jews could associate with them, and that Gentiles could become baptized as Christians. "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have (Acts 10:47)?" But Peter and even Barnabas began to draw back from the Gentiles in Antioch, until Paul rebuked him: "when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he clearly was wrong (Gal 2:11)." His argument was effective. Peter would go to Rome (1 Pet 5:13), the center of the Gentile world, beginning the papacy that continues to this day.

The gifts that we get for others are imperfect. We send them late or completely forget, remember but don't bother, misjudge and get the wrong thing. The gifts we receive from the Holy Spirit? They're perfect. The trouble is, we fumble them, lose them, put them aside, forget about them. But God's love and mercy are greater than our sin. In this Eucharist, we are about to receive it again. We pray for the grace to treasure what he gives us, and to share it with those in need.