

**ECHOING GOD'S WORD  
IN  
THE CATHOLIC FAITH COMMUNITY  
SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER  
May 10, 2026**

**Lectionary Readings:**

**Acts 8:5-8, 14-17**

**1 Peter 3:15-18**

**John 14:15-21**

**Samaritans too receive the Holy Spirit.**

**Our faith and hope are in Christ.**

**To love God is to obey God.**

**John:**

The key to understanding this part of Jesus' Farewell Discourse can be found in this perspective: It is really about the Church, the community of faith, within which Jesus is truly present and within which he acts in pursuit of the same goals he had in his earthly life. This is no mere abstraction! Very concretely, Jesus has come again already! He is at work from within the lives and ministries of the disciples. Remember, in John's Gospel, the Second Coming has already occurred in the giving of the Spirit to those who believe. The Spirit given is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, making Christ present in the work of the Church. From this point of view, we are not to wait for another coming of Jesus. He is already here. Now is the time to utilize his presence in the works we are to do.

John presents three kinds of presences of Jesus in the life of the community. These three are not particularly separated and differentiated from one another. They are three aspects of the same presence. 1. God will send an advocate, or helper, through whom the works of Jesus will continue to be done in the works of the Church. Jesus will be present in his works. 2. Jesus will come invisibly to the lives of the disciples. The unbelievers may not see him in them, but they will surely know that he is there through the powers they experience as they do the works he has sent them to do. 3. The presence of Jesus is really the presence of God the Father since these two cannot be separated. They have an identity of function. They do the same works. Therefore, they are one.

Love of God motivates us to obey God. It is no burden to conform our behaviors to the will of the God we love. God does not coerce us to do what we are reluctant to do. Eagerness drives our efforts to line ourselves up with the one we love. There can be no greater energy in us than the divine energy that is the Spirit of Jesus, urging us to obey God.

The proof that we love God is that we obey the teachings of Jesus Christ. To obey Jesus does not go against the grain when we are filled with the Spirit of Jesus. In the prayer of the community (sacraments) and in our personal prayer, we renew this outpouring of the divine Spirit within us. We open ourselves up to the impact of the Holy Spirit so that we can more readily respond to its urgings and its inspirations.

The presence of a loved one, close by in times of trouble, is the most reassuring sign of comfort and of support. One of our greatest fears is that we should be alone. Our hearts yearn for companionship and love. Jesus's disciples grew more and more alarmed as they sensed that he would not be with them long. A kind of foreboding comes over them as they begin to understand that he will be taken from them. They fear losing him, but they fear especially having to live without him. How can they possibly go on if he is not with them? He is the representative of the Father among them. When he is gone, the Father will be gone. They will be "orphaned" so to speak.

The abiding presence of Christ in our lives, in the life of the Church, is the most urgent reality if we are to survive as his faithful disciples. We cannot go through the pains and struggles of daily existence without his power and his comfort to sustain us. With him at our side, with Jesus as our constant companion, there is nothing we cannot endure. That is the kind of assurance that Jesus

wanted to give his followers: that he would not leave them. In the Holy Spirit, he can still be with them to empower them and to hold them up. Their courage will come from the felt presence of that Spirit within them, in their ministry, in their fellowship. They will not be left alone. Neither are we. The Spirit of Jesus Christ continues to abide with us in very real ways.

### **Acts:**

Already the good news of Jesus Christ is spreading beyond the boundaries of the Jews. Even Samaritans can receive faith. Their faith needs to be confirmed by the apostles through the laying on of hands. The miracles that were part of Jesus's own ministry now become manifest in the ministry of the Church. This illustrates the fact that it is Jesus who is working through the Church. The power of God at work in Christ is now at work in the Church.

### **Peter:**

Mature faith can be tested and opposed; it will not waver; it will not turn to violence. Our faith is not contrary to human reason. We can and should give an explanation for the beliefs we hold. We can witness to the community of non-believers by explaining what our faith means to us. It is better to suffer at the hands of non-believers for the faith we hold than to suffer at God's hands for the evil we do in denying him?

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

1. Do you sometimes have a sense that Jesus is very close, at your very side, in your heart of hearts, as you go through the experiences of life? When is this most real for you? When you are experiencing pain? Or when you are experiencing joy? Do you feel the presence of Christ being with you when you are with someone you love?
2. Has Jesus kept his promise to you not to leave you orphaned? In what ways have you known that the promise was kept? Can you give testimony to others that Jesus never abandons those whom he loves? From your own personal experience, can you relate a story of the comfort and power that Jesus has brought to your life?
3. In what sense is Jesus still present in the Church community? Share your faith in the abiding presence of Christ in the Eucharist; in other sacraments; in the Scriptures; in the gatherings of the community itself.

## **SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTIAN ACTION**

Decide on some word or deed by which you will render the merciful presence of Christ more real for someone this week.

## **PRAYER**

**All who worship God,  
    come here and listen;  
I will tell you everything  
    God has done for me.  
I prayed to the Lord  
    and I praised him.  
If my thoughts had been sinful,  
    he would have refused to hear me.  
But God did listen  
    and answered my prayer.  
Let's praise God!**

(From **Psalm 66, Contemporary English Version**)

## **CATHOLIC DOCTRINE**

Since the Holy Spirit, by its very nature, has no bodily form, the Church uses several different symbols to represent the Spirit: Water, Anointing, Fire, Cloud and Light, Seal, Hand, Finger, Dove.

*Water:* In the waters of baptism, the Spirit of God engenders new life in us. Just as our earthly birth is associated with “breaking of water” so is our spiritual rebirth in the waters of the baptismal font. All life comes from water, even in the natural order. The water that flowed from the side of Christ on the cross represents the new life won for sinners by his death.

*Anointing:* With chrism, at baptism and in confirmation, the Holy Spirit is represented as given to the believer. Jesus himself was “anointed with the Holy Spirit” as manifested at his baptism. Thus, his title of Messiah, a Hebrew word that means “Christ” or “anointed by God” in the Greek language. Jesus came to be born of the Virgin Mary by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit so that at his birth the angel could proclaim him as “Christ” or “the Anointed One.” This anointing continues in the life of the Church where the full measure of Christ is achieved.

*Fire:* The transforming energy of the Holy Spirit can be represented by fire: the new fire at the Easter Vigil, the Easter candle throughout the liturgical seasons. “I come to cast fire upon the earth,” says Jesus (Luke 12:49). At the first Pentecost in the Christian era, the disciples received the Spirit of Christ as in “tongues of fire” appearing over their heads. Paul tells the Thessalonians not to “quench the Spirit” as if it were a flame that can be put out.

*Cloud and Light:* On Mount Sinai, in the desert wanderings, God led his people to safety and freedom as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The cloud hovering over the tent is a sign of God’s presence. The Holy Spirit “overshadows” Mary and she conceives. At the Transfiguration, a cloud comes over Jesus and his disciples.

*Seal:* The Father has set his *seal* on Jesus. The indelible effect of the anointing of the Spirit in Christian sacraments comes from this reference. Baptism, confirmation and holy orders have a permanent effect on those who receive them.

*Hand:* Jesus lays hands on children and on the sick; power flows from his hand. The Church practices the laying on of hands.

*Finger:* The finger of God is an image for God’s divine power. It is by the finger of God that Jesus casts out devils.

*Dove:* The returning dove with an olive branch marks the end of the flood under Noah. The Spirit appears as a dove at Jesus’s baptism.

(See **The Catechism: #694-701**)

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