Alive in the Spirit: Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 21, 2017

Readings:

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

Psalm 66:1-7, 16, 20

1 Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

Jesus will not leave us alone. He won't make us children of God in Baptism only to leave us "orphans," He assures us in today's Gospel (see Romans 8:14-17) .He asks the Father to give us His Spirit, to dwell with us and keep us united in the life He shares with the Father.

We see the promised gift of His Spirit being conferred in today's First Reading. The scene from Acts apparently depicts a primitive Confirmation rite. Philip, one of the first deacons (see Acts 6:5), proclaims the Gospel in the non-Jewish city of Samaria. The Samaritans accept the Word of God (see Acts 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13) and are baptized.

It remains for the Apostles to send their representatives, Peter and John, to pray and lay hands on the newly baptized—that they might receive the Holy Spirit. This is the origin of our sacrament of Confirmation (see Acts 19:5-6), by which the grace of Baptism is completed and believers are sealed with the Spirit promised by the Lord. We remain in this grace as long as we love Christ and keep His commandments. And strengthened in the Spirit whom Jesus said would be our Advocate, we are called to bear witness to our salvation—to the tremendous deeds that God has done for us in the name of His Son.

In today's Psalm, we celebrate our liberation. As He changed the sea into dry land to free the captive Israelites, Christ suffered that He might lead us to God, as we hear in today's Epistle. This is the reason for our hope—the hope that sustains us in the face of a world that cannot accept His truth, the hope that sustains us when we are maligned and defamed for His name's sake. Put to death in the flesh, He was brought to life in the Spirit, Peter tells us today. And as He himself promises: "Because I live, you will live."