

Jn 14,15-21

By God's Grace may I speak in his name who is Father Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Alone. Sometimes it's nice to have a moment alone. But as we all go through this time of lockdown, I have a suspicion that we all sometimes feel alone and isolated in a more painful way. We are all experiencing the same lockdown, but our experiences can be very different. As I listen to different people, I can often hear a sense of being alone. Alone in your home and lonely. Alone with your worries about your health or the health of loved ones. Alone with the enormous pressure and stress in a job working in essential services on buses, in shops or hospitals. Alone in trying to juggle your job from home in addition to home schooling your children. Alone in your fear that your job might no longer be there when this lockdown ends. These are all very different experiences, and amidst this time of isolation they can make us feel quite alone.

That is why today's gospel reading is such good news for us. Because it tells us we are never alone. The time between Good Friday and Pentecost must have been a bit of a rollercoaster for the disciples, a confusing time with lots of ups and downs. First Jesus dies on the cross and everything seems lost. Then he rises from the dead on Easter day and they have various encounters with him, making it clear that Jesus' death was not at all the end. But now he tells them that he will leave them again, this time though they will not be alone. He will not leave them orphaned, but send them the Holy Spirit, who he promises them will never leave them. And because God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are one, if one is with them, all of God is with them. The promise that Jesus makes to his disciples in today's gospel reading though is not only for the disciples present that day. It is for all who love and follow Jesus and his commandments, including us today. We are never alone, because the Holy Spirit is always with us, wherever we are.

But what kind of difference does it make to have the Holy Spirit with us and in us always? Well, as Jesus tells his disciples in this gospel

reading, he is our advocate. He helps us pray, to petition the Father in the name of the Son. He enables us to do the work Jesus calls us to do, in our jobs, families and communities. He gives us the strength we need and the creative inspiration and wisdom to do his will. He brings forth his fruits as Paul calls them in Galatians 5,22-23: love, joy, peace, kindness, generosity and so on. But maybe most importantly: He ensures we are never alone. Being a Christian doesn't mean we never go through tough times or that bad things don't happen to us. But no matter how hard things get, we are never alone. And I think that is something incredibly powerful. As I was reflecting on this passage, I remembered a medical discovery. Twins often are born a little prematurely and sometimes that means they spend some time in a NICU. This can be quite stressful for the babies. But doctors have observed that for some reason, putting twins in the same incubator helps calm them and often improves their overall health. Not being alone somehow makes tough times a little better. And so, Jesus makes sure that we never are alone, by sending us the Holy Spirit.

Amen