

St. Columba's Episcopal Church
May 10, 2026 – 6 Easter
John 14:15-21
The Rev. Dr. Susan Kraus

This morning's reading from the Gospel of John is – like last week's reading – a portion of what are called Jesus' "farewell discourses," his final words to his closest friends and followers spoken just before his arrest and the events that culminated in his crucifixion. In the words we just read we hear Jesus telling his disciples how they will stay connected to him after his death. His words are as relevant to us as they were to those disciples.

First, on the disciples' side of the relationship. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." What does Jesus command? Love. Love one another. Serve one another. Do what I have done. Teach the Good News. Stretch out your hands to heal, to feed. Take up your cross and follow me. Jesus told his followers, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). And by this, the disciples of Christ – past, present, and future – show their love for him.

On Jesus' side of the relationship? "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth." Jesus is speaking about the Holy Spirit. The Greek word is "parakletos," or, in English, Paraclete, which means "one who stands beside," a supporter or comforter. In Latin an advocate is "one called to aid." Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death, his leaving. Throughout their journey together Jesus has always been standing beside and helping his disciples. He has taught them, guided them, and shown them the love of God. He recognizes how lost they will be without him. So, he gives them assurance that they will not be left alone, without comfort and support. He promises them ongoing, divine assistance in their journey of life and discipleship, in the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises: the Holy Spirit "will be in you." Our helper and comforter, the spirit of our Lord, within us, forever. That is the promise given by Christ.

Jesus gives his disciples further assurance. "I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." Christ will come again, in glory. We are waiting for that day, when the kingdom of God will be established forever. The day when we will know what we now believe. In Jesus' words, "On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them." As St. Paul wrote in his First Letter to the Corinthians, "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12-13).

There are occasions in our secular calendar when we are encouraged to remember people or events. Today throughout our country people are remembering and honoring mothers. Our prayer for Mother's Day calls us to think of how having a mother or being a mother may have been a blessing from God and an important part of our individual spiritual life and growth. The prayer also fits the love of mothers into the larger context of God's compassionate and everlasting love for all people. Julian of Norwich, the 14th century mystic, called Jesus "our true Mother" who nurtures and protects us and sacrifices himself for us.

In the church we practice remembrance every Sunday. When we read the portions of the Bible appointed for each week, we remember what is important in our salvation history. We learn about how God has often acted in history, beginning with the Exodus – the deliverance of

the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt twelve to fourteen hundred years before Christ. We are reminded, especially as we pray the Psalms, of how other people who love God have been in relationship with God, in good times and bad times. In the Gospels, we remember the teaching and the works of Jesus during his ministry. And in the Acts of the Apostles and the many letters in the New Testament, we recall how the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, was at work in the church for the first 130 years after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

Every Sunday we practice remembrance when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. We recall – we bring to our attention, to the “front” of our minds – what God has done for us, especially through Jesus, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. We share the broken bread and the cup of wine poured out in remembrance of Jesus. In the Holy Eucharist we receive Jesus and we give ourselves to Jesus. Through our participation in the Holy Eucharist, we signify our willingness – as a worldwide group and as individuals – to be broken and poured out to show the world the love of God, as Jesus did.

Each of us has a unique spiritual path that begins with our birth and continues all through our lives. We probably have only an incomplete memory of all the ways God has touched our lives. We can easily be so absorbed by our present concerns that we don't take time for the “holy remembrance” of our own “salvation history.” I would urge all of us to prayerfully remember when and how God has been present in our lives through the years, how we have known Jesus, how we have felt the comfort and help of the Holy Spirit, and how being a member of Christ's body – the Church – has supported and inspired us.

I mentioned last week that on June 7th Bishop Brown will be with us, and he will confirm three of our young people – Jessie Ullo, Ford Harris, and Sarah Harris. I met with them last week to talk about the church, about faith, and what to expect in the service. Each one of them has an understanding of how God is at work in their lives – all different because they are different people, all very real. As we finished our meeting I said, “If you believe in your heart that God is calling you to follow Jesus, then you are ready to be confirmed.” They do believe. When the Bishop asks them, “Do you renew your commitment to Jesus Christ?” each one will say, “I do, and with God's grace I will follow him as my Savior and Lord.” They won't follow Jesus on their own. The Bishop will ask us, “Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?” Our response is, “We will.” Yes, we will, by living as loving followers of Jesus.

Then together as a congregation we will renew our Baptismal vows. We might ask ourselves, “Do I believe in my heart that God is calling me to follow Jesus?” If the answer is “yes,” then you and I are ready to renew those vows once again and commit our lives to Christ. The Holy Spirit will be within the confirmands and within us, as our Lord promised.

The Holy Spirit reminds us, deep within our hearts and souls, of God, of Jesus, of divine love, of faithful living, of the hope given through the promises of Christ, of all that is good and godly. The Holy Spirit is that “still, small voice” always prepared to speak to us if we will listen, abiding with us, leading us to the truth, helping us to live as Jesus did, for the love of God and the welfare of God's precious world.

So may we always pray, in the words of the hymn we sang a few minutes ago, “With the healing of division, with the ceaseless voice of prayer, with the power to love and witness, with the peace beyond compare: come, Holy Spirit, come” (Hymn 513, “Like the murmur of the dove's song”). In Jesus' name. Amen.