

Sermon for 17th May 2020.

6th Sunday of Easter.

In these strange times when we are all required to pull back from our friends and family, and self isolate it's very easy to feel completely alone. Even for those of us who still rise, shower and go to work every day our routines are now completely different. No more sharing a table for meetings but we now use video conferencing. Nobody comes through the office door to say hello, and I can go whole days without conversation. I don't even have the opportunity to complain about the traffic because there isn't any.

At home we try and plan for the future but with nothing certain and no definite date for a resumption of "full normality" we just have to hope and pray.

And we know we are the lucky ones. Our reality has seemed to move away from what we have known but there are so many others who have no communication with others at all.

Our gospel this week is so fitting for these times. The disciples must have been worried about being alone, being isolated from others; and Jesus is comforting them. He promises the Holy Spirit as an advocate; and for those of us feeling isolated at these times I hope we can find comfort in his words.

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth.

I looked at the definition of *advocate*, and what having an advocate means to a person.

This is what I found. An advocate will listen to your views and your concerns and also help to explore your options and rights. An advocate will provide information to help you make the right decisions and will accompany you in meetings or appointments. An advocate however will not make judgements about you or influence your free will.

I believe the Holy Spirit, The Spirit of Truth is the greatest advocate, and is, as always, there for us right now, and every moment of our lives.

My Mum used to say that a trouble shared was a trouble halved. (It was true most of the time; except when I told her I was troubled because I'd broken her favourite vase! That really *didn't* half my troubles. Having said that I could stop worrying about making the confession or being found out).

But my Mum's saying is true. When we pray we take the time to quietly tell The Lord our worries and our troubles and set them before him. In the quiet we can feel his presence and we know that he hears. And when we have set them before

Him we can see them for what they truly are. The Lord is our advocate and listens no matter how many times, how long it takes, or how small those problems are. He listens and hears. And when we set them before The Lord so often our options and rights will shine forth. He know our thoughts, and the truth, and in prayer we can see clearly and honestly our options for a way forward.

An advocate will provide information? Well The Bible certainly provides information. In its pages we find the way that Jesus lived his life on earth; and in his actions and words we find love, compassion and forgiveness. The Bible is the greatest resource of information ever and Jesus is the light that we can follow. In John this week we find our information condensed into a few sentences:

“Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

And there it is. We are told to keep the commandments and love Christ. The commandments themselves are spread throughout the scripture. We only have to read. Christ, as our advocate, has given us all the information we need.

And God is always there. Not only in our solitude, but in every meeting and appointment that we make. No matter where we are and who we are sharing our lives with God loves us and is with us. Again from this week’s Gospel reading:

But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.

And yet we still have our free will. We can choose to love Christ and follow his commandments of love and compassion; or we can choose to turn our backs on Christ. But, *He* will be there, always, waiting with open arms for our return.

In these troubled times we should never forget that the mercy of Our Lord is always there around us. We have constant access to the greatest advocate of all time and in our isolation we are not alone, we are no orphans.

“The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

Mike