

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

**Unseen Power**      Sixth Week of Easter      Tuesday, May 27, 2014      8:15 AM  
Acts 16:22-34; **Jn 16:5-11** (St. Augustine of Canterbury, bishop) (Becoming spiritual adults)

**“For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you.”**

This is part of the farewell discourse of Jesus, and it expresses a thought that is not exactly something we easily accept. We are physical people; we live in the physical world. What is really real to us is what is physically present to us that we can see and touch and taste and hear. **We know there’s a lot more to life, but it isn’t physically present to us.** We can think about other nations, other times, other peoples, but they are not present to us; and so they are less than fully real. **So in religion people often cling to something physical,** something tangible, something audible, something they can grasp, **whereas really God is something way beyond our grasp.**

Now this very God has come in the person of Jesus, the Word of God embodied, to demonstrate, by way of revelation or self-disclosure, what God is all about. But that situation cannot remain for reasons that we cannot explain. **Why couldn’t the risen presence of Christ remain on earth** as it did for the first period of the Church’s life? I don’t know. I don’t know how to explain it, but in the wisdom of God it’s not how it is going to be. Jesus here explains it: “It is better for you if I go, because **if I do not go the Advocate will not come,**” **the Advocate being the Holy Spirit.**

There is a way in which **when a child grows up and leaves home,** he or she is coming into his or her own life. Now all the good and all the evil that he or she has experienced, in a way, comes with. We all hope that they remember their training. We hope they remember how to behave and what are good choices as opposed to bad choices. But actually it’s out of our hands; **they are independent human beings with free wills.** And that is a blessing.

**They cannot remain forever in our presence for us to direct them.** And if for some reason or other, their presence, their physical presence, returns to us, that often causes all kinds of friction because they are no longer a minor under our control. They are majors, adults, under their own auspices.

So Jesus is describing a similar situation in regard to discipleship and faith. **If we remain in the physical presence of Christ, even the risen Christ, we are not ever coming totally into our own.** We are not really going to be adults in the truest sense. We are not really going to be exercising our free will because we are going to be under the overwhelming presence of the risen Lord. But it's better for us if that recedes and we come into our own, hopefully remembering all the things that Jesus taught, but now without any sort of overwhelming presence, without any sort of extraordinary power or influence, so that **we can really exercise our free will and really become the people we choose to become.**

Now if we were simply to be thrown back on our own resources, that would be a tragedy and it would end in a disaster. But that's not the case because Jesus and the Father have sent the Advocate. So **we have all the power that was visible in Christ, but it's no longer visible. It's within us,** not outside of us. **It can teach us when we are really willing to listen,** but will not show up unexpectedly as Jesus did in the upper room, for example. And it's better for us. **This more adult way of life is actually better,** and we have to think about that and see why it is so.