

Fruits of the Holy Spirit Sixth Sunday of Easter/C May 26, 2019 Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Rv 21:10-14, 22-23; **Jn 14:23-29** (Fortunately for us, we can leave in the dust the cares and the desires of our egos and accept God's superior plan of a God-centered life in the Holy Spirit.)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.”

We are in today's reading back at the Last Supper trying to unpack the very dense and deep words Jesus left us before his death. They are worth thinking about. It may seem odd or strange that **Jesus actually advises against being troubled or afraid, as if that's a matter of choice.** As you know, it isn't. Ordinarily no one wants to be troubled or afraid or would choose to be. However ominous forces and overwhelming **challenges have their way of butting into our lives unwelcomed and uninvited.** But Jesus' advice or counsel implies that he thinks that **we can rise above these dark forces.** The actual context was his own impending death.

This of course cannot be explained without reference to the Holy Spirit. **The whole import of Jesus' resurrection can only be felt in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit.** I'm glad these flames that we put up for Confirmation have stayed with us for a few weeks; we usually are much too quick to celebrate the gift of the Spirit and then zip right into our summer vacation without much thought or recollection or reflection on what this gift is all about. **We need to awaken to the Spirit** and take full advantage of the gift that God is giving us. **Indeed in the Holy Spirit we can abide untroubled and unafraid even in the midst of all kinds of travail and turmoil.**

As you also know, believers are in no way exempt from the **burdens that human life involves. But believers are not alone in carrying them.** The Holy Spirit is a *paraclete*. A paraclete means a companion, an advocate, a friend. **God means to be our companion, our advocate, and our friend as we walk our daily journeys.** Unlike unbelievers who are all on their own trying to forge ahead in the murkiness of the world, believers are **accompanied by God himself in the Holy Spirit.** And God wants us to be consciously aware of his presence, his guidance, and his support. **This requires a certain amount of work on our part, a certain kind of focus.**

Sad is the so-called believer who arrives at death's door frightened and afraid. The Letter to the Hebrews says, “The devil kept the world in bondage by the fear of death,” but the cross and resurrection of Christ has put an end to this fear for believers. So **fear** in a believer is actually pathetic, and it can only happen **when one ignores the guidance, support, and presence of God, which we can do if we are too busy, if we are out of focus, if everything else is more important—but then shame on us.**

The fruits of the Holy Spirit offer us a rich life-affirming emotional life. Charity is the first and foremost gift of the Holy Spirit. It is the love of God himself, **God's own love unconditioned, unending, infinite given as a gift. The love which is God is like light. It contains within it all colors. Through a prism these colors are visible each with a distinct wave-length. The colors of love are: joy, gentleness, kindness, peace, patience, self-control: these are wonderful ways of living and feeling.** They are intended to be the way believers live.

They are however incompatible with the ordinary emotional life, which is centered on self. And this kind of life is very common in our world. **Self-centeredness can only bring an entirely different palette of emotions**, a darker one, chiefly dominated by fear, anxiety, and anger. **Instinctively we know that a life centered on ourselves is in the long run unsupportable and unsustainable.** If everything depends on me, I'm in trouble. We actually have an instinct that tells us that, and yet instinct alone will not raise us up to the level of God. That is a matter of a deliberate act of faith. **Fortunately for us, we can leave in the dust the cares and the desires of our egos and accept God's superior plan of a God-centered life in the Holy Spirit.**