

The 6th Sunday of Easter - Year A
May 10, 2026
Acts 8:5-8,14-17 — 1 Peter 3: 15-18 — John 14:15-21

Most of us know what it feels like to be on our own.

A problem we didn't expect.

A situation we can't control.

A moment when everything feels uncertain...

...and we think to ourselves: **Am I all alone in this?**

That's exactly the moment Jesus is speaking to in today's Gospel.

He tells his disciples: **"I will not leave you orphans."** And then He promises to send them the Holy Spirit—an Advocate.

But that word—**Advocate**—it's hard to pin down.

In Greek, it can also mean comforter, counselor, companion... the Paraclete.

It's one of those words we struggle to translate,
because — the reality is so much bigger than any one word.

That became very clear when a group of scholars tried to translate the New Testament into the language of a small tribe in equatorial Africa—the Karre people.

They came to this very passage and realized: there was no word in their language for "advocate," or "comforter," or "counselor."

So they looked at the life of the people. They noticed that when a group set out on a journey through the bush, each person carried a bundle on their head—food, supplies, whatever was needed.

Everyone carried something... except one person. At first, they assumed that must be the leader.

But they were wrong. That person had a different role.

If anyone along the way became exhausted and collapsed under the weight of their burden, this person would go over, lie down beside them, and take up their load—carrying it for them.

In the Karre language, that person had a name: **“the one who falls down beside us.”**

And the translators said: That’s it. That’s the word. That’s what Jesus means when He promises the Holy Spirit.

This is a beautiful image of God’s presence in our lives. Because there are moments when the weight we carry is simply too much.

- When a marriage is strained and nothing seems to fix it...
- when relationships break, and the loss leaves us empty...
- when our health fails, and fear or pain presses down on us...
- when we lie awake at night, turning things over and over, and don’t know what to do...

In those moments, Jesus does not say, “Figure it out.” He does not hand us the Gospel and say, “Good luck.”

He gives us His Spirit— the one who comes to us... who falls down beside us...and quietly takes up the burden we cannot carry on our own.

Let me give you an example of how this happens.

Three years ago I concluded my term as the Provincial of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales. This came as I was concluding 45 years of ordained ministry, and 55 years of Oblate life.

So the Question was - what next? As I thought about it I realized — I was tired, weary, worn out.

Like many priests, while I was a pastor, I often held 1 or 2 other jobs. At one point, as a pastor, I was merging 2 parishes, the Assistant provincial, and director of international Oblate missions. It was a lot. I was done. I decided at that time — I needed a break, I needed to stop. So, I retired.

Then, a year later received phone call asking if I was interested in coming here, Our Lady of Lourdes, I did not jump up and down with excitement. I remember thinking: I don't believe I have what it takes anymore. I don't have the energy, passion or ambition I had 40 or even 10 years ago. I didn't know if I could care enough or love enough to do the job as it deserves to be done.

On the other hand, I knew, I was also getting a little too acquainted with my recliner and daytime television. So after much thought, prayer, and a fair amount of bargaining with the Holy Spirit, I finally said yes. I told myself, "I'll give it one year.— One year!"

Which, of course, is the same thing people say right before buying a treadmill.

Now, let me tell you what happened when I came here. The Holy Spirit fell down beside me. The Spirit came and lifted my burdens. AND, it happened through you.

You, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, have a great reputation as being a very welcoming parish. Your welcome to me was wonderful... your faith...your goodness...your commitment to service...your joy...is simply amazing - and something in me was healed and lifted up.

I found energy again. Joy again. A renewed love for this work. That's how the Spirit works - it works through each one of us. Through you.

And that's why Jesus can say with such confidence:

"I will not leave you orphans."

Because we are never alone. Not in our struggles. Not in our fears.
Not even in our weakest moments.

God is not distant, not watching from afar. Through the Holy Spirit, God is beside us. And more than that—Jesus says something even more astonishing: “We will come and make our dwelling with you.”

God doesn’t just visit us in times of need. He doesn’t just show up occasionally. God desires to live within us. To fall down beside us.

As Francis de Sales wrote, “Do not wish to be anything but what you are, and be that perfectly well.”

Holiness isn’t about becoming someone else.
It’s about allowing God to dwell—right here—in the life we already have.

In our homes. In our work. In our daily routines. Even in the burdens we carry.

And we are reminded of that in a profound way every time we come to the Eucharist.

Because here, Jesus doesn’t just promise to be with us—He comes to us. Not as an idea...but as a real presence.

So this week, when life feels heavy...when you feel like it’s all on your shoulders...remember this: You are not alone. You are not abandoned.

The Holy Spirit is already with you—the one who falls down beside you... and helps carry what you cannot. God is beside you, with you, within you.

One final comment - there is another place the Spirit still needs to help me... This is the 9th parish I’ve been involved in. Just think of all the names I’ve had to learn - thousands.

My brain just doesn't seem to have enough room for any more. I'll look at someone today and remember their name - next week, I'm thinking, "Is it Joe, Mike, Tom?" And I won't have a clue.

My sincere apologies for that. You'll just have to be patient with me, and continue to help me with that. It would be nice if you all wore name tags, BIG ONES, just for me. Think about it.

But, bottom line, WE ARE the Body of Christ. It'll be OK!

May God be Blessed!