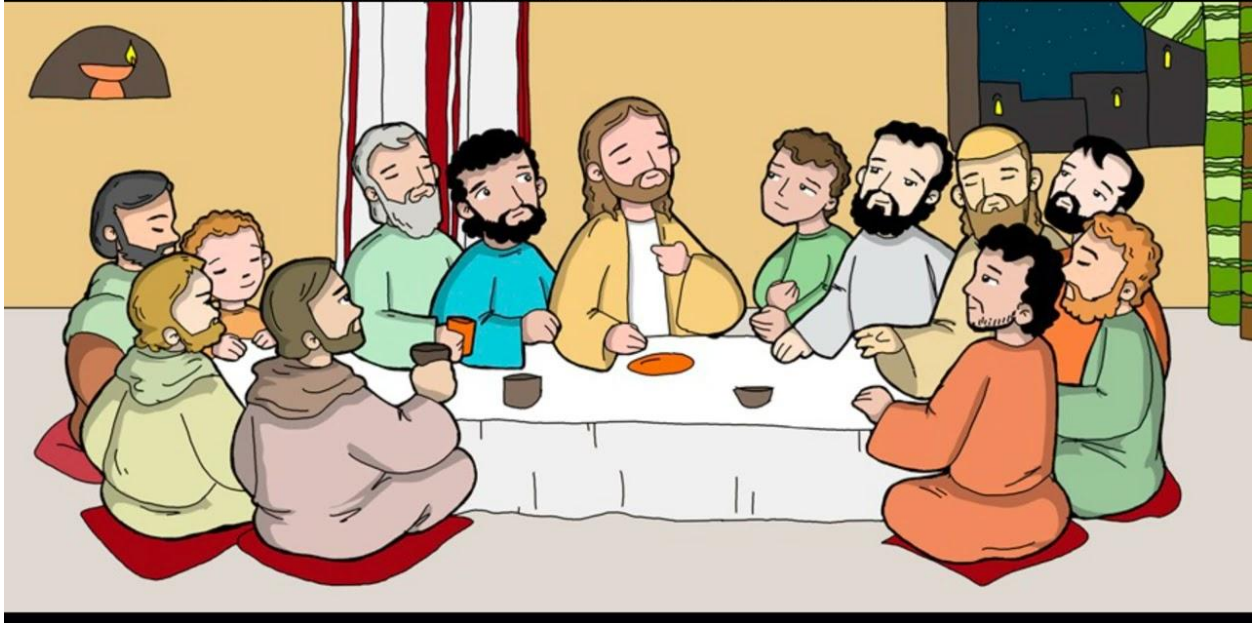


Sixth Sunday of Easter  
May 10, 2026  
John 14:15-21



## Gospel John 14 15-21

On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you.



I'm thankful for this text two weeks before Pentecost because I've often lamented that we dedicate only one Sunday a year to talk about the Holy Spirit. I will talk about the Holy Spirit, the undersold third person of the Trinity, every chance I get.



I'm also thankful that this text occurs on Mother's Day, for it is often our mothers who, like the Holy Spirit, are our constant supporters, biggest cheerleaders, and strongest advocates.

The context for the words in John 14:15-21 is Jesus' Last Supper Discourse, continued from last Sunday. Jesus has washed his disciples' feet and given them a new commandment. His heart is aching, for one of his closest friends will betray him and another will deny him. Yet, his deep concern is for them. Jesus says the wonderful things he says and makes the amazing promises he makes to encourage his followers through the next horrible 24 hours and beyond. These words are an exhortation to persevere in times of difficulty and persecution. We are not left on our own. We have a constant companion. The God who made us, and is for us, will now be in us.

Jesus promises to send an advocate (paraclete – called to our side), who will be with us and in us forever. What do you think of when you hear the word advocate? A defense lawyer? I've been watching "The Lincoln Lawyer" on Netflix this year, a courtroom drama series about a lawyer named Mikey Haller who works out of his car, a Lincoln Navigator, usually chauffeured by a past client. Haller provides protection for, argues on behalf of, and guides his clients, never giving up, never abandoning them, even when they ignore his advice or become difficult. I love to think about the Holy Spirit like that — tenacious and willing to get dirty.

Paraclete has also been translated as helper or comforter. Isn't it great to have someone on our side to help and comfort us? Someone who listens to us and speaks words of peace? This is a great promise, especially when it feels like the whole world is against us. We can do almost anything if we know we are not alone. Jesus has not left us orphaned.

My mother was an advocate in human form. She would fool around and express, "you spend too much time with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" and I would respond, no Mom! It's Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and Jeremiah that I spend too much time with. And then she would say: Why don't you take a day off and get some rest?"

How often do I ask my holy advocate for directions, guidance and support? How often am I quiet enough to hear the Spirit speaking love, life and light to my soul? I fail to take advantage of our advocate as often as I need to. And still, this great helper breaks through with so much peace, so much help, and so much truth that I am strengthened and comforted.

In this text, Jesus explains that there is a relationship between receiving this advocate and keeping Jesus' commandments. Is it conditional? Is the gift of the Holy Spirit for those who believe contingent upon our ability to keep rules?

I don't think so, because Jesus said these words to comfort his disciples. This is an assurance. When we keep his commandments, we are able to experience his presence with us and enjoy our advocate, helper, comforter: God in us. The reverse is also true: Obeying the commandments of Jesus is impossible without our advocate. Loving Jesus by keeping his commandments and the advocacy of the Holy Spirit in our lives are inextricably tied.

Jesus has given commandments during this discourse. "If I your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another" (John 13:34). His commandments are about loving one another, and he will go on to say that's how the world knows we are his disciples, "if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). When we don't keep his commandments, we represent him poorly and inaccurately to the world.

The truth is that we do not always love as Jesus loved. If you could hear the stories I hear when I am at a secular gathering and people find out I'm a pastor, you would cry. I've heard hours of testimony about how the church has wronged and excluded them. I am not sure the church was the party at fault in every case; some of these people were extremely ornery.

But have you ever tried to love, really love, an ornery person? Have you ever tried to treat someone who bitterly disagreed with you with honor and respect? Have we ever attempted a soft answer in the face of wrath, forgiveness in response to wrong, or turning the other cheek as Jesus commanded? Have we ever really tried to love one another as Jesus loved us?

It's the hardest thing we will ever do. G.K. Chesterton proclaimed, "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and left untried."

So, what do we need to turn us around? To be found faithful? To make us into the people and church God is calling us to be? Evangelist and author Christine Caine, best known as co-founder of the anti-human-trafficking organization The A21 Campaign, said, "I assure you, we do not need a 10-step plan for how to grow our church or a symposium on community organizing." We do not need more money or better facilities or marketing strategies. "We need the Spirit of Jesus Christ and how it disrupts, disorients, and brings life to a troubled church and a troubled world."

And so we pray, "Come Holy Spirit, our advocate, helper and comforter!" so that we may love Jesus well and keep his commandments, witnessing his love to our weary world.

Questions for reflection on John 14:15-21

1. How do you experience the advocate Jesus talks about in your life today?
2. Do you ever have trouble keeping Jesus' commandments? Why do you think that is that so important to Jesus, especially on the night before he died? What might help us be more faithful?
3. How have the women in your life, past or present, been advocates for you? Say a prayer of thanksgiving to God for them.