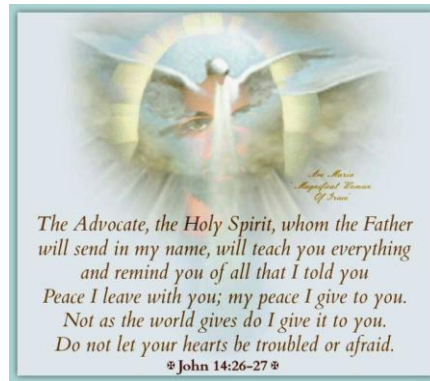


## HOLY SPIRIT: BEST ADVOCATE EVER!



### Scripture:

### Psalm 66:8-20

<sup>8</sup>Bless our God, O peoples, let the sound of his praise be heard, <sup>9</sup>who has kept us among the living, and has not let our feet slip. <sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried. <sup>11</sup>You brought us into the net; you laid burdens on our backs; <sup>12</sup>you let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a spacious place.

<sup>13</sup>I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will pay you my vows, <sup>14</sup>those that my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble. <sup>15</sup>I will offer to you burnt offerings of fatlings, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats. *Selah*

<sup>16</sup>Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me. <sup>17</sup>I cried aloud to him, and he was extolled with my tongue. <sup>18</sup>If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. <sup>19</sup>But truly God has listened; he has given heed to the words of my prayer.

<sup>20</sup>Blessed be God, because he has not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me.

### John 14:15-21

<sup>15</sup>“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup>And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. <sup>17</sup>This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in<sup>[c]</sup> you.

<sup>18</sup>“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. <sup>19</sup>In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup>On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup>They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

**This is the Word of the Lord! Thanks be to God!**



### HOLY SPIRIT: BEST ADVOCATE EVER

Pastor Carol Merritt who graduated from my seminary a few years before me wrote a story about her daughter getting a favorite book signed in a bookstore by the author of Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. (Jim Carey stars in the movie made from the book.) I guess she loved the book but it sounds a bit morbid to me. The story goes: “When a massive fire kills their parents, three

children are delivered to the custody of their older cousin who is secretly plotting to steal their parents' vast fortune.”

So when Carol's daughter hands the book to the author, Daniel Handler, he writes in the book: *To a future orphan*. This really startled her mom. She didn't want to think about her daughter ever becoming an orphan. But we all do someday. It is the way of the circle of life.

## WE ALL NEED AN ADVOCATE

In today's Gospel of John passage, Jesus is making a big announcement saying he is sending an advocate. Jesus tells his disciples to never fear, the advocate will be here.

That is what my daughter, Kathryn, is studying to be, a legal advocate for refugees and orphans. But don't we all need an advocate? Someone who is on our side, helping to smooth our path in life, guarding us from harm, guiding us and picking us back up when we fall? All of us need an advocate. We are not made to go through life's journey alone.

And so, God provides.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples at a time when his death is palpable, so he intensifies his teachings. I imagine his disciples leaned in and listened intently to his words sensing their importance.

### THE LAST SUPPER

Let's put this event in context: Jesus is sitting with his closest entourage at what we now call The Last Supper. He is within twenty-four hours of his bloody death on the cross.

Jesus has already washed their feet and given them the command to do likewise for others, to humbly serve all in need. And in the midst of that meal with the betrayal and cross hanging over them he explains how he will provide for them after he is no longer visible on earth in the same form.

He says, "I will not leave you orphans." Jesus promises to still come to them, but in the form of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. This will be his new way of revealing himself to them, the spiritual way.

Remember, we Presbyterians believe in a Trinitarian God, which is made up of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God all wrapped up in One Trinity.



This symbol often seen in Celtic art is called a Trinitarian Triquetra. It shows the three entities all intertwined as God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are intertwined. This symbol of three is also found in Buddhist Japanese art symbolizing the Divine within us.

**Christ's message to his disciples must have been very reassuring. And his message at the same time to us is:**

**You will not be alone; you don't have to face anything by yourself. In every moment in our lives, Jesus promises to be with us and advocate for us in the form of the Holy Spirit.**

### A WONDERFUL PROMISE

What a wonderful promise! You would think the disciples would jump up and rejoice and sing, My God is an Awesome God or something! But once again, the disciples didn't really understand what he was talking about. Later, after his dying and rising, they began to remember and understand what he meant about sending an Advocate.

Jesus promises, I will live and you also will live. I will send the Advocate and I will not leave you orphaned. You will never be forgotten or alone. Jesus will face everything with you, floods, droughts, cancer, tornadoes, earthquakes, famine. In all the tragedies and in all our joys our risen one says you are not alone.

### GOD GIVES US A CHOICE

We do not have to face anything alone, unless, we decide to face it alone. Here is where we should be honest. God gives us a choice and we can choose to be orphans and choose to face life without acknowledging God's presence. Every time we stop praying and helping others, we are choosing to not be as closely connected to God. When we behave in an isolative, self-centered way, we are choosing to keep God at a distance. That doesn't mean God abandons us; but there are often times when we abandon God.

### PEOPLE OUT FOR THEMSELVES

Have you ever known someone like that? Someone who thinks they are just in this world alone, out for themselves? So they manipulate and strive to get all they can no matter who they hurt. Often this is because they don't have faith that God is with them and they fear death more than anything. Bernie Madoff comes to mind. He had thousands of victims and stole twenty billion dollars

from them. While he spends the rest of his life in prison, a CNN money article reported that he can't sleep. It's not because he stole all that money, but because his son, Mark, committed suicide in response to his father's crimes. And Mark's brother, Andrew, also died of cancer in his forties. Both had worked closely with their father but denied knowing he was cheating so many people out of so much money.

Sometimes you can tell which people are going through life without faith in eternal life by the bumper stickers on their cars. They might say,

"The One with the Most Toys Wins," or  
"I'm Spending My Children's Inheritance."

(I hope none of you here have those kinds of bumper stickers!)

I recently saw a bumper sticker I might get for myself. It said, Jesus Loves You

*But I'm His Favorite*

I think the funniest bumper sticker I saw recently said: I was an Honor Student.

*(I don't know what happened!)*

(It was making fun of those stickers that say my child is an honor student.)

## **WE ARE NEVER ALONE**

As Christians we trust that we are never alone and that eternal life means we don't have to grab for all the gusto we can while here on earth. Jesus promises that the rest of eternal life waiting for us is much more glorious than we can hope for or imagine.

Trusting in that and knowing we are not alone helps us to be self-less and take risks to love our neighbors because we don't fear death. We don't worry about getting the most toys or spending stuff on ourselves for that temporary high. (See the picture on page one.)

## **THE GREATEST GIFT EVER**

**When God decided to leave the Holy Spirit with us as our Advocate and our guide, it was the greatest gift ever. This shows the parental love God has for us. God provided, knowing our weak and vulnerable souls need reassurance of God's presence all the time.**

God knew we would feel like orphans if God didn't give us something to hold onto when Jesus ascended after he accomplished his mission here on earth.

## **THE MANICURIST FROM VIETNAM**

But many people don't know about Jesus and the Holy Spirit still today!

I took my mother to a nail salon in Texas last week as a Mother's Day gift. The manicurist was a young man from Vietnam. He asked what I did for work. When I told him I was a pastor he shared that he grew up Catholic in Vietnam and never met a woman pastor before. Then as time went by he said, I think I believe in following Buddha because Buddha was a man and I can follow a man; but Jesus was a God. I can never be God.

So I felt compelled to try to explain to him how Jesus came to earth in the form of a man to demonstrate God's love in action, to show us how to be at peace with one another, and to heal and forgive. When I was done he said he wished he could visit such a church. He didn't know there were churches that believed in Jesus that way. (So I directed him to Mom's Presbyterian Church.)

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls the Spirit "another" Advocate, which shows that Jesus considered himself to be an Advocate, too. And we are to be Advocates for each other, helping each other feel love and support.

After Jesus' ascends, the Spirit remains with the disciples; but this does not mean the Spirit replaces Jesus. Rather, the Spirit illuminates and expands their understanding of God and Jesus for the community of faith, to help them have no fear.

Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit?

Dr. David Long says that we get two insanely helpful clues from this passage that, together, offer a pretty good picture of what the Holy Spirit looks like.

Clue #1: The Holy Spirit looks like an Advocate,

- The one who stands up for you when you need it;
- The one who speaks on your behalf;
- The one who lends you a helping hand, takes your side, and won't leave or forsake you.

Clue #2: The Holy Spirit looks like Jesus. The Spirit is "another Advocate" because Jesus is the first. The Spirit is sent in Jesus' name and reminds us of what he taught (John 14:25). In a very real way, the Spirit

mediates Jesus presence and helps to keep his promise that he will not leave us orphaned.

### **WE'VE SEEN THE SPIRIT**

Thus, *the Holy Spirit is an Advocate that looks a whole lot like Jesus*, which means that we've actually seen the Spirit lots of times.

- ❖ Anytime, in fact, someone stands up for another.
- ❖ Anytime someone acts like Jesus.
- ❖ Anytime someone shows the love of Christ to others, there we've seen the Holy Spirit.

No wonder, then, that Jesus says, "You know him." Because, as it turns out, the Holy Spirit at one time or another has probably looked a lot like you, and me, and definitely a lot like each and all of us when we do these things.

The Holy Spirit looks a lot like you when you stand up for others.

As you go out the doors today, there is a full-length mirror. On your way out look into the mirror and smile and see the Spirit in you going out to the world to save the world from isolation and fear.

Then later this week, stop and ponder where you've seen the Holy Spirit in the world around you, either through the good you've been blessed to do for others or the good you have received from others.

Like Jesus' other name, Emmanuel, which literally means God with us. That name contains the formula for peace within. Trust that God is within and around you always. Then your journey in this world will be fearless, and you will be empowered to show God's healing love in action wherever you go.

Remember, John starts out his Gospel with this quote from Jesus, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me." Amen

### **Benediction:**

**Pentecost is coming up soon. It is the first Sunday in June. Plan to wear red or orange or yellow to symbolize the tongues of fire of the Holy Spirit.**

**Of the three in the trinity the Holy Spirit is spoken about the least. And yet, it is the power that prevents us from succumbing to the fear of death and the fear of being alone in the world. Pentecost will be a time to celebrate that power!**

**Fear is crippling and paralyzing. Trust in the Holy Spirit to wipe away your fears and your tears. Choose to let God be your shield, your wisdom, your power and your love. And notice how your fears melt away.**

**And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and forever more. Amen**



**Rev. Dr. Cindy Alloway  
Presbyterian Church of the Roses  
2500 Patio Court  
Santa Rosa, CA 95405**