

EASTER IV 2017

SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER JOHN ALTBERG

JAMES 1.17 JOHN 16.5



I WILL SEND YOU HELP...AN ADVOCATE... THE COMFORTER... WORDS OF JESUS FORM THE UNDERLYING THEME FOR TODAY. Coincidentally, it is Mother's Day...set aside to pay special tribute to those who bring much comfort to our lives...always on our side, our unceasing supporters...our *personal advocates*.

Smug misdirected folk claiming '*special status*' are often fond of arrogantly claiming GOD IS ON **MY** SIDE! Responses range from enthusiastic agreement to nervous laughter to the instant conclusion of the conversation!

All too familiar geopolitical conflicts have applied this perspective throughout history by self-styled 'AGENTS OF GOD' in very disturbing ways.

That is and always will be a convoluted application of GOD ON OUR SIDE...run; don't walk, from people peddling such distortions.

Run toward today's Gospel...Jesus telling the Apostles...GOD IS ON YOUR SIDE...they had no clue what he meant. He told them I AM GOING AWAY BUT I'LL SEND HELP...one more in his series of strange announcements...

We now know what Jesus meant about "going away"...his Ascension. But the part that always is hard to grasp...is the part about "the Comforter." You are not alone if you find it puzzling...!

What or who is the "Comforter?" When I think of "the comforter" I envision the one on the bed stuffed with down...quite good on a cold night! While it may seem an odd comparison, it is not an altogether absurd analogy...God does bring the ultimate **COMFORTABLE** condition to you your life!

Translation doesn't explain what Jesus meant by "Comforter" so we have to resort to linguistic analysis. The Greek NT word is *paracletus* from which comes the English "paraclete" - rare term requiring explanation. Paracletus was left un-translated in the 3c Vulgate and should probably have been (L) *advocatus*,...Advocate, the more literal translation of the word. A few centuries later it was translated *consolator* and evolved

through French to the English word... "Comforter"

Jesus told his followers...when I go away there will come a greater power that will serve you well for all time...he was forecasting Pentecost and OUR future!

The COMFORTABLE WORDS following the General Confession and Absolution in the Mass carry this same meaning...listen carefully - you will hear the word "advocate" in the last of the four...again...God on our side!

In the Epistle James tells us very plainly how we are supposed to behave in the face of all we know. Everything that we have comes from God (yes...even the down comforter from LL Bean) we are made in His image and called to act accordingly. We must listen to the words of St James, take them to heart and put them into practice. Through the reception and the practice of God's love and support we have the opportunity of a truly rewarding time in this life... and the next!

Today's Epistle and Gospel may have seemed obscure in their connection with Easter but now make sense...we are saved from ourselves through the **advocacy** (sacrifice) of Jesus. God is prepared to provide the means of greater comfort, be on our side, our advocate [perhaps 'AGENT' is even clearer] and helper in this life...our role is behaving in a civilized and reasonable manner. We received similar advice from parents...my personal experience suggests mothers are quite definitive about this...and not to be ignored is the perpetual penchant for corrective counsel...!

Though Mother's Day does not appear on the calendar of the Church Year...it's easy to infer the concept commenced quite early in the life of Jesus...consider 'maternal counsel' on the journey from Passover...advocacy at Cana...and the vigil of Our Lady Mary on Good Friday.

Jesus promised the people in Jerusalem he would send the comforter/the advocate/agent into their lives. It was not a restricted gift...it extends to us as well...the true gift that keeps on giving!

We give thanks always with God - and moms - on our side!

