

### The Paraclete: Our Divine Coach

By Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

Roald Amundsen, the great Norwegian explorer who discovered the South Pole took a homing pigeon with him on his trip. He told his wife that if he reached the end of the world, he would release the pigeon. His wife sat for hours, all alone in their big house looking up the sky for the promised pigeon. One day she looked out the bedroom window and saw the pigeon circling in the sky above. "He's alive!" she cried, "My husband is alive!"

As Jesus gets ready to leave his disciples, he promises to send them the Paraclete who is often depicted as a dove. But there are enormous differences between the pigeon that Amundsen sent to his wife and the Paraclete that Jesus sent to his disciples. The pigeon is merely a sign that the traveller has reached his destination. Beyond that the pigeon can do nothing more. The Paraclete that Jesus sent to his disciples, on the other hand, means to them everything that Jesus himself meant for them while he was with them. Jesus was a Paraclete to the disciples, and he promised them "another" Paraclete: **"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete"** (John 14:16).

What is a Paraclete? Many words have been used to translate this word into English. They include: Advocate, Comforter, Counselor, Helper. The Greek *Paracletos* literally describes someone who is called to stand beside a client. In legal terms that would be your attorney. But a Paraclete is much more than an attorney. Probably the English word that we use today that most nearly captures the meaning of Paraclete is the word "coach". The Paraclete is our coach, always by our side, to instruct and correct us when we make mistakes, to encourage and motivate us when we feel down, to challenge and inspire us to be the best we could, to defend us and fight for our rights when the judges are unfair to us. In short, the Paraclete means for us all that Jesus meant for the disciples.

Why do we need a Paraclete? For the same reason that athletes and sports people need coaches. No matter how good they are, sports people always need coach-

es. Even Tiger Woods has a coach. Left on our own, we are prone to mistakes and errors. Without God we can do nothing, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD there was a British thinker called Pelagius who taught that human beings have the natural ability to fulfill God's commands if they so choose. The church condemned his teaching as a heresy, insisting that human beings always need God's grace in order to please God. Pelagianism is the belief that we can fulfill our human destiny just by being ourselves, and that we do not need the grace of God that comes through faith, prayer or the sacraments. Many people today are Pelagians without even knowing it. Jesus tells us in today's gospel that we all stand in constant need of divine help. We all need the divine Helper, the Holy Spirit who stands always by our side, the Paraclete.

How then do we receive this all-important Spirit Helper? It is striving to live according to the law of Christ which is love of God and love of our neighbor. **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever"** (John 14:15-16). After the Ascension of Our Lord, the disciples **"together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus"** (Acts 1:14) retired to the upper room to wait and pray for the promised Paraclete. We cannot do better than follow their example. Next Thursday is Ascension Thursday. Between Ascension and Pentecost the church invites all her children to a period of prayer and waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us observe this period as a special period of prayer just as the disciples did because we need the Holy Spirit today as much as they needed it two thousand years ago.

### READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 8:5-17    1 Peter 3:15-18    John 14:15-21

May 25, 2014

# 靈 修 生 活

## 「誰 愛 我，我 就 在 他 心 中 作 住 所。」

吉 朝 芳 神 父

每次我們在一起誦讀聖經，或聆聽道理，所聽的，所誦的，如同桌上的菜一樣，我們喜歡，或不喜歡。有些人不喜歡主日經文，對道理也無甚興趣，認為來來去去總是那一會套。不過我們要相似吃菜一樣，好壞都要吃，為我們來說，是好的，也是有營養的。

曾有一位神父，對道理的認識透澈是夠透澈了，但不善辭令，許多人認為他不會講道理，不去聽他。另有位神父，雖無高深學問，卻很會講道理，且講得頭頭是道。這是甚麼原因呢？因為我們都是天主的工具，作用不同，領受的神恩亦各有分別。

今天福音講的，就是聖神神恩。耶穌對門徒表示護慰者聖神將會到來，且「永遠與你們同在」。事實上耶穌籍著聖神的德能，回到門徒們心中，和他們一起工作。

聖神的重要性，我們可以從祂未來前和耶穌升天後，門徒驚慌憂苦的情況看出來。聖神降臨後，教會開始成立。首初三百年，受盡迫害。最可怕的是在教會中有異端分裂。其中最嚴重的分裂是在公元 428 年，當景教 (NESTORIUS) 一位隱修院神父提昇為東方 (CONSTANTINOPLE) 的總主教 (相當於羅馬教宗)。他認為聖母只是耶穌人性的母親，是人性的耶穌死在十字架上，故反對聖母為「天主之母」。他因異端被禁除後，開始把景教從波斯傳入中國。在唐朝時，由唐太宗開始有兩百年的興盛，受到皇帝的擁護，建了八十多座教堂，但現在已全部消滅不見了。相反，天主教不但沒有滅亡，且日益興盛，這全是聖神的功能。假如沒有聖神，開首的三百年打擊，想必早就滅亡了。試看世界歷史上的偉人、君王、雖曾顯赫一時，如今全都煙消雲散，不留痕跡。但天主教卻遍佈全球，原因就是聖神護祐著教宗、主教、神職人員……。至今二千年來，共有兩百六十二位教宗，其中八十位已成為聖人，另有七、八位真福品。

無論是過去、現在，或者將來，歷史是永遠站在真理的一邊。像史太林、希特拉，他們雖是天主教徒，但沒有善盡基督徒的職責，辜負了天主的救恩。毛澤東也是領過洗的無神論者，其教友身份不過浪得虛名。所以天主雖將聖神賜給我們，若不懂得珍惜和利用，便會像世人「看不見祂，也不認識祂了」。

耶穌是死在兩個賊人當中，是為愛我們，為我們罪人而死。死後復活了，還打發真理之神來興盛祂的教會。我們應該感謝天主聖三；沒有天主聖三的苦心和護祐，就不會有今日愛的教會。

的確，聖神是在我們心中。正如耶穌說：「誰愛我，我就愛他，就在他們心中作住所，使他們結果實」。

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 五 月 廿 五 日

宗 8:5-17; 伯前 3:15-18; 若 14:15-21