



## *Pastor's Column*

*St. Peter Catholic Church*

*April 29, 2018 ~ Fifth Sunday of Easter*

### *The Eighth Stage of Discipleship Formation*

We continue our present study of the stages of discipleship formation. Last Sunday, we reflected upon the seventh stage: we who are the students must eventually become the teachers. For the disciples must become the apostles, sent forth by the Lord to evangelize and proclaim the Gospel.

And now, the eighth stage of discipleship formation: acknowledging and trusting in the role of the Holy Spirit in our holy endeavors. After all, Christ sent the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, as Counselor and Teacher for the Apostles after Christ ascended into Heaven; and only in the power of the Holy Spirit is proclamation even possible.

The role of the Holy Spirit in overall discipleship is important for us to recognize if we hope to be effective in sharing the Gospel with others. The Holy Spirit is the “forgotten” Person of the Holy Trinity, insofar as most of our prayers generally are directed toward the Father and insofar as how we worship as Catholic Christians involves the sacramental life of the Church, and the Sacraments are visible signs instituted by Christ (God the Son) to effect grace. But the role of the Holy Spirit, and in fact the *Person* of the Holy Spirit, remains largely nebulous and confusing compared to the Father and the Son.

And so, the role of the Holy Spirit in discipleship. First, consider Saint Paul, who states in his letter to the Romans that God the Father, “Who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all,” will “also give us everything else along with Him.” (Rom 8:32) And Jesus Himself says to us in the Gospel account of Saint John, “the Spirit of truth...will guide [us] into all truth.” And so, both the Father and Son promise to give us *all* and *everything*. And indeed, we *have* been given everything, but we do not yet understand it all. Jesus says to His disciples, “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now.” We are hungry for that 28-ounce porterhouse...but we need to start with a salad. The Holy Spirit is sent to us to guide us in stages, little by little, into the deeper and higher truths of Heaven and Earth so that we can absorb it and digest it as it is given to us. We cannot yet bear it in its entirety, and so we must be led gently into it.

In His farewell discourse in the Upper Room, Jesus discusses further the role of the Holy Spirit, that the Holy Spirit will *remind* us of all that Jesus has taught us, that the Holy Spirit gives *witness* to the glory of God and the Gospel of Christ and thereby empowers us likewise to be witnesses, and that the Holy Spirit *convicts* righteousness and sin, wherein the Holy Spirit gives us a double gift: the truth of conscience and the certainty of redemption. (See John chapters 14, 15, and 16) In this, the Lord basically summarizes the three-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit in discipleship formation: reminding, witnessing, and convicting.

Reminding: “The Holy Spirit is the Church’s living memory.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1099)

Witnessing: People today listen “more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if [we listen] to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” (Pope Blessed Paul VI)

Convicting: The Holy Spirit “will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and condemnation: sin, because they do not believe in Me; righteousness, because I am going to the Father...condemnation, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.” (Jesus Christ, Jn 16:8-11)

~Fr. Lewis