Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:5-8,14-17

Psalm 66

1Peter 3:15-18

John 14:15-21

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows him.”

For some reason the word ‘advocate’ reminds me of a lawyer. Perhaps I’ve been running reruns of ‘Perry Mason” too many times through my head. In my religious frame of mind, I thought the ‘Advocate’ of the gospels intercedes for me before the Father in heaven to explain that I’m really trying to lead the life of Christ. The errors I seem to commit can be excusable and not leave me liable for punishment. If anything, my punishment should lead to community service and not purgatory nor hell.

Well I was troubled by my definition of advocate that I kept in my head. It just didn’t ring true. So I looked up what ‘advocate’ means. Advocate does mean a champion or spokesperson (so I wasn’t too far off.) It also means supporter, booster, liberator, sponsor, and activist.

So this is the gift that was given to the people of Samaria through the apostleship of Peter and Paul. The Advocate is the gift from Jesus. This gift will be always with us. The Advocate’s presence in us will not leave us orphans. The Advocate will be our supporter, our booster, our liberator, our sponsor, our activist. The Advocate will need to be all of that for all of us who struggle to be Jesus-like in the world – a world that cannot accept us as believers, especially when we cling to hope in the love that God has for us in a world that sometimes serves up hopelessness on our plates.

When the world is cruel to us, the Advocate, our liberator, will boost our faith in a God who loves us. When the world dishes up difficulty and asks, “Where is your God now?”, the Advocate supports us in our faith in a loving God.

When bad things happen to good people, our Advocate boosts our understanding that God is good and doesn’t do bad, especially to those who believe.

Beloved, the Advocate gives us the assurance and gives us the courage to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts no matter what comes along in our lives.

At the end of the month, I will baptize a baby – a gorgeous baby with loving parents and a beautiful greater family. This baby, two months old, was born with holes in his heart, an esophagus not attached to his stomach, a body that cannot as yet produce red blood cells, and other anomalies. His parents want him to be baptized – to be a righteous child of God and to be anointed with the oils of the Sacrament of the Sick. The world will scoff, but the Advocate will boost our faith in a God who cares about this baby and his family. This baby will be God’s child. And what good father would turn his back on the child that he loves.

We have been praying for a four-year-old girl who has leukemia. The world will question our prayers but it will have nothing to say when we pour out our hearts for her and her family even to the point of joining our parish’s ‘Meal Train’ to provide dinners for the family and supporting a benefit held in her honor on June 18th at the Elks Club in town. The Advocate is our sponsor in faith.

We pray for a teenager who is wracked with pain day and night because of a disease that has his doctors stumped. We supported a ‘Go-fund-me Page’ to help with medical costs and transportation costs to send him to doctors all around this country for a possible diagnosis. Why do we pray and have hope? The Advocate boosts our faith in our God who will help him and us have hope.

We had a healing service in our church last Saturday. Why did fifty people show up to be anointed with the holy oils? The Advocate brought us together to show the world we still have our faith no matter what our difficulty.

Our Advocate is not as a lawyer between us and God. The Advocate is a gift from our God – a gift that the world cannot see nor believe in. But we see and believe. With all our hurts and ills, with all our illnesses and anomalies, with all that the world blasts us with, we are not without hope, love, and faith. We would be crushed and forlorn. We would curse our God not love Him were it not for the Advocate – a gift from our Father in heaven through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Allow me to quote from Steven Gray who changed his name to Adyashanti after he immersed himself in Zen and studied the great mystics. The following quote was posted on Facebook on my nephew’s wife page.

Adyashanti says:

At the very heart and core of our being, there exists an overwhelming yes to existence. This yes is discovered by those who have the courage to open their hearts to the totality of life. This yes is not a return to innocence of youth, for there is no going back, only forward. This yes is found only by embracing the reality of sorrow and going beyond it. It is the courage to love in spite of all the reasons not to love. By embracing the tragic quality of life we come upon a depth of love that can love ‘in spite of’ this tragic quality. Even though your heart may be broken a thousand times, this unlimited love reaches across the multitude of sorrows of life and always triumphs. It triumphs by directly facing tragedy, by relenting to its fierce grace, and embracing it in spite of the reflex to protect ourselves.

In the end, we will either retreat into self-protection. Or acknowledge the reality of sorrow and love anyway. Such love not only transcends life and death, it is also made manifest in life and death. You give yourself to life out of love, and it is to love more fiercely that you walk through the fires of sorrow that forge the heart into boundless affection. Adyashanti.

Sometimes beaten down by the sorrow, worry, and hopelessness, how can we fiercely walk through the fires of life? By praying, “Lord, send down your Spirit and renew us and renew the face of the earth.”

As far as those people I mentioned. God loves them as His own. We cannot do otherwise.