

John 15:26—16:4

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

28 May 2017

St. John's, Chicago

In the Name of the Father and of the +Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.”***

***“He will bear witness about Me.”*** Jesus prophesies here that the Holy Spirit would bear witness about Him. The Spirit speaks Christ to you! That's what He is saying. He delivers Jesus and the forgiveness, life, and salvation that He brings, through the Word of God preached and taught. Being forgiven and nourished by that witness, you, in turn bear witness. Jesus says so.

So...? How well are you witnessing in your actions, so that others know you are a Christian, and the Lord who saved you? Are you speaking and witnessing the Gospel of your Risen and Ascended Savior with your loved ones? Your neighbors? Your co-workers or fellow students? Or do your words and actions blend in with the generic religious fluff that does not declare Christ at all?

Do you think it is acceptable just to bemoan that no one surveyed at Six Corners could tell you where St. John's is? They don't know where OLV is either. Or St. John's Episcopal. Or St. Bart's. So do you just shake your head and grumble that our boards should do a better job of publicity, or do you realize that you should be inviting others to join you in hearing God's Word?! And that invitation should come from a life lived out of faith.

How well are you witnessing through your stewardship? Would those around you notice a quiet, humble, generous giving to the Lord of your earthly finances and treasures? Or might you appear stingy or tight to your neighbor in the pew? Is yours a household that gives generously,

or is it one that spirals into the springtime cash flow problem, so that we worry about meeting payroll and other expenses around here? Such stewardship bears witness to our trust in the Lord to provide, both as households, and as a parish.

Can others see from how you **spend your time** that you are devoted to the Lord, or would they simply see you are a hard worker, who enjoys a few hobbies or sports? Do they see a sharing of your gifts, talents, and abilities, and thus a sharing of what Christ gives, or are you shying away and avoiding those sorts of things.

Maybe those around you haven't got a clue that you are a redeemed child of God. As you miss opportunities to bear witness about Christ, you fail at opportunities that the Helper has given you.

You can be just like virtually every other American, in love with the idea of a generic god, but not liking His specifics. Liking the notion of gathering to give thanks and pray, but not wanting to take the time or make the effort that others around you will know that you have a particular God and Lord who has become Man for you, that you may receive forgiveness and life through Christ alone, by His suffering, death, and resurrection.

You like hearing about making your life better and following good choices, but are quite uncomfortable facing your failures and sin. And your Old Adam is just as uncomfortable hearing that God's solution is quite specific and particular.

Yet it is precisely through the specific and particular words and works of Christ that you receive His forgiveness and life. And you have the extreme joy and privilege of receiving them through His witness week after week.

We regularly and frequently gather to receive these Gifts which strengthen and protect us. That is the entire purpose of coming to the Divine Service. Not simply to pray. Not merely to praise God. Yes, those are good things and great blessings. But they are not the main reason for being in worship, but to receive His Holy Gifts.

You really are freed and released from your guilt as you hear the Gospel preached! It is happening right now! God is canceling your debt of sin and selfishness at this very moment! He

did the same at your Baptism, and soon He will sustain you with Himself in the Sacrament of the Altar. As you continually receive Jesus in His Gifts, He continually works on you and forgives, protects, and strengthens you!

Jesus' ascension did NOT take Him away! No, dear friends in Christ. He ascended precisely to come to you! Now He can come in His Body to bring Himself to you, and with Himself, His holy gifts of forgiveness and life. He bears witness to Himself. He sends the Helper, the Holy Spirit, who bears witness to Christ through His Word and His Sacraments. He bears witness as He forgives and nurtures you as His new creature, and provides you with the words and works to be his witnesses.

Thanks be to the Lord Jesus, who sent the Spirit of Truth, and who is with you, giving you protection and all things you need to be ushered into eternal life. His glory, His suffering, His death, and resurrection, and now, His ascension, are all for you! So rejoice in His resurrection, knowing that this Good News brings you Christ Jesus Himself! Amen!