

Sixth Sunday of Easter A - The Spirit of Truth

May 10, 2026

The Acts of the Apostles follows the work of the early Christian community in the years immediately following Christ's death and resurrection. Thus, readings from Acts are particularly appropriate in the weeks following Easter Day. In today's reading (Acts 8: 5-8, 14-17), Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed the Christ to them. With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was said by Philip and they accepted the word of God. Peter and John came and prayed for them and laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. And the church continues to grow, not only in spite of persecution but in part because of it.

In his letter to Christians in first-century Asia Minor, Peter takes a similar tone of respectful engagement (1 Peter: 3, 15-18). He acknowledges the existing tensions between the established Greco-Roman culture and the Christian converts. Christianity is a new, foreign religion; there is suspicion and fear that these converts will upset the established social order. Peter exhorts his readers not to be intimidated by opposition; always be ready to defend their hope in Christ; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. He reminds them to keep their conscience clear and not to retaliate against those who misunderstand and malign them, while always staying true to the core Christian values. Peter frequently returns to the matter of suffering for one's faith. He makes it clear throughout his letter that genuine faith cannot escape struggle. Indeed, we as Christians are always called on to account for our faith. We proclaim a crucified Master who told us that it is better to serve than to be served. We are willing to suffer for our good deeds because then we are closely identified with a suffering servant whose wounds have healed our own. Our faith is in an indefensible position. Not even death itself threatens our hope, so what is there to defend? We defend only our manner of life, which should defend itself by virtue of its good works.

Similar words of affirmation show up in today's passage from the Gospel according to John. The importance about this gospel passage (John 14:15-21) is that it moves us away from the resurrected Jesus to show us the new manner of his presence in the world: the Spirit of Truth. Jesus offers his followers words on how to live a Christian life: If you love me, you will keep my commandments. Words of assurance and hope: God will send you an Advocate, a Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who will be with you forever. Words of Unity: I am in you and you are in me and we are in God. It prompted us more than ever to see life with spiritual rather than material vision. We are taught to walk by faith, not by sight. With the coming of the Spirit, we have an even more intimate union with Christ. The Holy Spirit is the Counselor who never leaves us alone, acting as our advocate. It was not an easy adjustment for the apostles, nor is it for us. But love makes it possible and that is the point of Jesus' words to us. God loves us as friends, which means He desires our good and offers forgiveness. Jesus calls his followers to live out love, which is not just an emotion but is shown through action and obedience to His commands. With love, there is peace. True peace is not bought but is a gift from God, intended to help us and the Church endure. The proof of our love is that we obey Jesus knowing that we are loved by the one we obey. As God loves us, so we shall love God. Jesus told a lawyer that he has given the right answer when he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." (Luke 10:27). That is the right answer to inherit eternal life. We submit to the Lord's commandments not just because we want to inherit eternal life but because we love and trust the one who commands us to love. This is the revolutionary concept of loving obedience that Jesus asks of us. Jesus knows that "the world" cannot accept it because the world does not recognize him for who he is. Are we willing to accept this? Do we recognize Jesus for who he is in our daily life? The bottom line in Christianity is that our obedience, our faith, our love is centred on the person of Jesus, God's love made visible. Centred anywhere else, our obedience, faith and love will be burdensome.

Pope Francis ended his 2018 message for World Communications Day with a prayer for respectful communication. Let us pray together in his words: "Lord, make me an instrument of your

peace, and help me to bring respect into my conversations. Give me the grace to listen with an open heart before I speak, and the wisdom to pause when my heart is stirred. Lord, remove the venom from my judgements and help me to speak about others as my brothers and sisters, even when I disagree with them. Grant me the humility to recognize your image in those with whom I speak. Where there is shouting, let me bring listening; where there is confusion, let me bring clarity and charity; where there is hostility, let me bring respect. I offer my words to you, that they may be used for healing and unity, rather than division. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen”.