**THEME:** THE HOLY SPIRIT – PARACLETE AND TEACHER

**READINGS:** Acts 15: 1– 2, 22 – 29/ Rev. 21:10-14, 22 – 23/ John 14: 23 – 29

6th Sunday of Easter

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The solemn feast of Pentecost is just two weeks away and today’s gospel reading affords us the opportunity to meditate on the Holy Spirit. According to this reading, Jesus told his disciples [at the Last Supper]: ‘**I have said these things to you while still with you; but the PARACLETE, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will TEACH you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you’** (John 14:25-26). I have, therefore, titled today’s message: ‘The Holy Spirit – Paraclete and Teacher.’

PARACLETE:

The name ‘Paraclete’ is a transliteration of the Greek word, ‘parakletos’ which has several meanings: it was used to refer to one’s advocate/lawyer, consoler/comforter or counselor.

ADVOCATE: As our advocate, the Holy Spirit is on our side and speaks on our behalf. Thus, St. Paul writes: ‘the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered’ (Rom. 8:27). Secondly, as our advocate, the Holy Spirit protects us from evil spirits. The safety of our souls is absolutely assured in the Holy Spirit, because no spirit can withstand the Spirit of God!

COMFORTER: As a lawyer would do for a discouraged client [accused of a serious crime], so the Holy Spirit comforts us when we experience the difficulties of life; He encourages us to persevere in our lives. So let us call upon Him in difficult times.

COUNSELOR: As a lawyer may counsel his/her client [regarding what to say at the court hearing], so the Holy Spirit counsels us in many ways:

* **The Spirit may counsel us when we are called upon to defend our Christian faith**. Thus, Jesus assures us: ‘when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, what you should say. For the **Holy Spirit** will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say’ (Luke 12:11-12).
* **He may counsel us when we need to discern and make a good decision**. For instance, in today’s first reading on the question of whether gentile male converts should be circumcised or not, the apostles declared that the Holy Spirit inspired their discernment and decision (Acts 15: 28). Similarly, if through prayer and obedience to the Holy Spirit, we remain in constant touch with him, He will guide us with divine wisdom in the choices or decisions we have to make in our daily lives.

TEACHER:

Jesus, as mentioned already, told his disciples: the **Holy Spirit** ‘**will TEACH you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.’** Thus, in the first reading, we see the Holy Spirit teaching the apostles about the essential requirements of salvation in Jesus Christ. Even today the Spirit of God continues to play this teaching role in various ways and through different people:

* Through the pope and bishops, the Holy Spirit continues to teach us.
* Through the priests, the Spirit continues to teach us.
* Through parents, catechists and other Christian religious teachers, the Spirit continues to teach children and students.
* And in our personal reading and meditation on the Word of God, the Spirit continues to teach us.

CONCLUSION:

Through our participation in the nine days of prayers [Pentecost Novena], may we begin to experience more the Holy Spirit as our Paraclete and Teacher:

* May we experience more His advocacy in our prayers and in our fight against evil, amen!
* May we experience more His encouragement and strength in difficult and challenging times, amen!
* May more of His counsels abound in our lives, especially in our important decision-making moments, amen!
* And, may we never depart from the truths of His divine teaching, amen!