

Exaudi

St. John 15.26—16.4

16 May A+D 2021

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

You need help. You probably know this already. You need spiritual help, because your mind and heart are not conformed to God's will. You need bodily help, because you are dying. You need help.

Jesus ascended in order to send you the Helper. But pride says, "I need no help. I can do it on my own. I've compared myself to others, and I'm pretty good. My job gives me money, my doctor gives me pills, the black rectangle gives me entertainment. I don't need help." O foolish of heart and slow to believe! For you are a slave to your money, your doctor cannot avert your doom, and your black rectangle leaves you numb and empty.

The Lord Jesus knows the help you need. So He sends to you the Helper, the Holy Spirit. But do not look for a help that will make life a little smoother. Do not look for a help that will make health last a little longer. Do not look for a help that will make your wallet a little fatter. That is not the help this Helper gives.

Do not look for the help from this Helper to be in miracles, feelings, or experiences. It is true on the day of Pentecost, which we will observe next Sunday, the Holy Spirit's work was confirmed through certain signs – a rushing wind, the Apostles speaking in other languages. Later there were healings and other signs done by the holy Apostles. But these things were never the main thing. Remember what Jesus said to Thomas, who doubted the resurrection: **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."** Believed what? The Word spoken, the Word read, the Word preached. For Jesus also said, **"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it."** The Apostles did not point to the signs and miracles. When the Holy Spirit came, the signs were only to get the people's attention. And when they listened to his Pentecost sermon, Peter did not point to the signs but to the water, and the promises of God therein:

“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

That is the help the Helper gives; that is the comfort the Comforter gives: the Word in Baptism, in Absolution, in Eucharist: your sins are forgiven; Christ is risen and you shall rise too; Christ is ascended and the way is now opened for you back to the Father. It is not a way that you have to find for yourself, or travel by yourself. The Spirit helps you, not by pointing out the way but by joining you to Jesus who is your Way. Not by helping you make your own truth but by teaching you the Truth. Not by helping you make your own life, but by being your Life.

All this is the help the Helper gives, by joining you to Christ. Without this help we will stumble. We might stumble under the burdens of this life – the cross, tribulation, and the anguish of death. But do not fear these things, dear children of God. Christ promises to send the Holy Spirit to comfort you in that hour, so that you will not lose heart.

There is another kind of stumbling. It is when you think you no longer need help. That you can make it on your own. That your good works are enough. That your sincerity is enough. That your sins are insignificant. Jesus says that when the Helper comes, **“He will convict the world of sin ... because they do not believe in Me.”** That is the real sin – turning away from God’s help and looking inward or to the world for your help. Many today look to politicians for their help. Ps. 146 says, **“Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.”** In other words, do not look to the government, the hospital, the courts, or Wall Street for your help. A well-ordered society is a blessing, but it must not be your god. Put no trust in what the world offers.

Now I must warn you: the help the Helper gives can sometimes seem ... very unhelpful. For His help is in words. Just words. But in these words is life! After Jesus taught that life is found in eating His flesh and drinking His blood, that those who so eat and drink He will raise up from the grave and give eternal life, many of the disciples went away from Jesus. They did

not like this teaching. Jesus turned to the Twelve and said, **“Do you also wish to go away?”** Peter replied, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”** To whom shall we go? Peter realized that there is no other help, there is no other comfort, there is no other counsel. Jesus’ words are life.

So why do you look to other helpers? Why do you look for comfort in what you know does not satisfy? Why do you resist the call to repent, to turn from your sins and leave them behind? Say with Peter, **“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.”**

For that is the help the Helper gives. The Words of Jesus. Those were the words echoing in the ears of the holy martyrs, cheerfully going to their deaths. Why look for help from Caesar, when they had the Helper, who would help them through the grave? What good would it do to gain their lives back here, only to lose them in eternity?

So remember, this is the Help our Helper gives:

- The devil accuses you and throws your sins in your face, but the Helper says, “None of that! Jesus paid for all sins.”
- The world says, “We don’t like you,” and passes you by, but the Helper says, “The Father loves you, and gave His Son for you. He came to be your Brother.”
- Your flesh says, “You are dying, and even before that, you’ll never get control of yourself.” But the Helper says, “Your self-appraisal should not come from the devil, the world, or your own flesh. It comes from God, who says, ‘I have redeemed you, I will save you from death and hell.’ Look only to Christ, and do not listen to those other voices. They only mean to harm you.”

My friends, you need help. I need help. We need more help than we can even fathom most of the time. But you are baptized, and you have a Helper. God helps those who cannot help themselves. ✠INJ✠