

## The Spirit is Reason to Have Hope Pentecost B

Today is reason to have hope. The collect and readings today write of the manifold role of the Spirit in our lives that helps, comforts us, teaches and guides us. Consider the promises made to God's people about His continuing presence with us. Before Jesus visibly departs this earth, He promises an Advocate. The disciples are filled with sorrow at the thought of Jesus leaving. Yet the Advocate will fill the void. This Advocate is the One we celebrate today, the Holy Spirit!

While it would have been nice for Jesus to hang around for a few millennia to help us understand and live out His words, God instead had another plan. He took Jesus from the world that He so loved, and gave the power of the Spirit. The gifts of God were manifest in each disciple. Together we will become the body of Christ freshly filled with the Spirit. The Spirit has come, and He desires to work through us. We are the recipients of the promise of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit that gave birth to the Christian community on Pentecost would also be its advocate. An advocate is someone who looks out for the welfare of another. An advocate is one who supports a particular cause. It can be a helper who intercedes on one's behalf, or one pleading a legal defense. The Advocate Jesus speaks of in the gospel is the Spirit of God, and Jesus has paid all the legal fees necessary for His people to have this Defender.

The presence of God's Spirit would give the new Christian hope. The ministry of the Spirit gives hope for the future. Hope points to the future, but it also ignites courage in the present. Who could not use a little hope in our current time?

The Spirit took an advocacy role when Jesus completed His earthly ministry. His role is the teacher of hope, the role of advocate for the new community of Christians and the role of gift giver to help build the new Church.

Now that the world's ruler has been defeated the Spirit is an advocate for Jesus' teaching. The Spirit as an advocate has a "campaign" role to glorify Jesus, to guide His followers into the truth, to make known everything that is for the good of all concerned. When a new Christian can only see conflict ahead, great hope is needed. The power of the Spirit comes to make the people fearless. Even the ones who believe that Jesus is Lord must be filled with fearless power.

Let's do an evaluation of the Spirit's work! Hypothetically, let's give Him a report card. I'll report and you decide! Jesus teaches that the Spirit will prove the world wrong and prove Him right. Proving the world wrong and Jesus right should be an easy job for the Holy Spirit. He's had a lot of time to work on this. Let's see what Jesus teaches about the Spirit's job now that He has left earth.

Jesus outlined a job description for the Spirit in the gospel. First, the Spirit would address sin because the world did not believe in Jesus yet. How would you grade the

Holy Spirit 2000 years later? Has there been much progress in proving the world wrong about sin? If we were to go to “adherents.com” which tells us how many believers there are in a particular faith we would see that there are billions of people that make the claim to be Christian of one brand or another. What grade would you give the Spirit as an advocate against sin? Is there any less human failure because there are more Christians? In a world that trembles with the threat of nuclear weapons is there hope? Has Jesus been proved right and the world wrong? You be the judge!

Let’s go on as we assign a grade on the Spirit’s report card, this time with regards to righteousness. This one is a lot harder to judge. Righteousness is one of those words that confuse people – after all whose righteousness are we talking about? Jesus says that proving the world wrong about righteousness has something to do with Him leaving the world. Jesus certainly lived a righteous and just life before men and God. His life gave the world a script of what such a good life looks like. At Pentecost, without Jesus’ presence, the Spirit has the tough job of convincing the world that the way Jesus lived was the right way. Again, do you judge righteousness by the numbers of adherents or do you look for another sign in which to grade the Advocate on His success in this area? The Spirit uses God’s word to declare men just and unjust before God. Is there hope for a just people if the world is proven unjust? You be the judge!

The last grade we can give on the Spirit’s Advocate role is on judgment. Unbelief and unjust living are rightly judged by the Spirit. The Spirit’s job is to prepare the world for a time when Jesus as Lord returns to judge the living and the dead. By His death and resurrection Jesus’ life vindicated God and His justice. When Jesus said “It is finished,” Satan’s power was limited. The author of the lie, the rebellious prince that rebelled against God, was struck a fatal blow. The ruler of this world is now condemned. Does humanity have hope to fight the once invincible foe? You be the judge!

We can not fight this foe without the Spirit of Hope. He is our Advocate and Guide. The Spirit gives us gifts to build Christ’s Church into a mighty fortress that can withstand the wiles of the evil one and the gates of hell. The Spirit is as close as your breath and breathes hope into all who come to Him.

What about this Pentecost Day gives hope? There is hope that many believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and He will come again. There is hope that many strive to live a just life by the power of the Spirit. There is hope in the judgment of the Holy Spirit, who defends, protects and builds up the Christian to endure to the end. The Spirit has many things to show us. He will declare the things that are to come. Come Holy Spirit! Be our champion and guide. Fill us and rock the church as you once did long ago! Amen