

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

“...Peace I leave with you;

my peace I give to you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.”

“During the night, Paul had a vision...”

The portion of the Gospel we heard this morning

comes from the Gospel of John in that section

where Jesus is giving his final discourse to his disciples.

Earlier he has washed their feet and given them a new commandment..

to love one another, just as he loved them.

Now he is telling them that he will be leaving them,

and as their anxiety begins to build,

he bids them peace...

peace in the face of the change that is coming upon them.

They fear the change,

as all people fear change.

Jesus reminds them that in the midst of that change

the Spirit will come from God in his name

to continue the teaching that he has begun.

“...the Advocate, 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.”

Christ reminds his followers that the Spirit has even more to teach;

that the Spirit will come to them

and guide them through the words of Jesus and beyond.

To put it another way,

the good news they have found in Jesus will not end with his death,

in fact his death will make it even better,  
for the teachings of Jesus will continue beyond his death  
through the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

The tough part comes, as it always does,

in the hard work of actually discerning the teachings of the Spirit.

Sadly, not all change comes from the Spirit.

In the same way,

a dedication to the maintenance of the rich traditions of the church

is no guarantee that we will not stray from the path of righteousness;  
that the Spirit will not leave us behind.

It is not easy being a Christian.

It never has been and it never will.

Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling something.

So how do we sift through the dross and find the gold.

How can we be sure of the promptings of the Spirit.

The Spirit is hard to predict;

Hard to see coming.

Much like trying to find a dim star at night,

it takes patience and effort to see.

More often than not you catch it out of the corner of your eye  
instead of looking directly at it.

But even though it's hard to see, you certainly know it when you do see it.

You know the Holy Spirit by the fruits that are nurtured in its presence.

The fruits that grow and come to ripeness.

Love. Joy. Peace.

Patience. Kindness. Generosity.

Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control.

When you find these gifts growing in your heart,

pay close attention

for the Holy Spirit is near.

My friends I have a revelation to share.

It's not a big deal really,

but it is becoming more clear to me.

The Holy Spirit is at work in us.

OK,

I know the Holy Spirit is always working on us,

but I feel like the Spirit has been a bit more obvious of late.

Yes, change has been forced upon us by the pandemic,

but even more, the Spirit is moving through us and around us.

The itch to consider doing things a little different,

seems to be a bit more obvious of late.

Things we used to tolerate are becoming less so,

though not in a fractious or angry way.

It's more like an energy building.

An energy building for action.

As we come out of the restrictions and changes of the pandemic

we will be looking with fresh eyes at who we are now

and who God might want us to become,

And I hope we will be opening ourselves in more direct ways

to the urgings and longings of the Holy Spirit.

One of the things I know about the Holy Spirit

is that sometimes the Spirit is as subtle as the dew fall,

and sometimes as subtle as a thunderstorm.

I would be lying if I didn't say that this reality makes me a bit nervous.

As Jesus said to Nicodemus,

“The wind blows where it chooses,

and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from

or where it goes.

So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

The Spirit isn't something one can lead or direct.

Not even a Bishop can do that.

But the Spirit is something that can be harnessed.

Harnessed when we remember that we are all created by God;

that Christ comes to us to show us the way

and to redeem even our most pitiful attempts

to model his life, and do his will.

Harnessed when we keep our hearts open

and our minds ready

to respond to the movements of the Spirit.

And when we remember

that the Spirit is moving around and through us constantly,

shaking off our sloth

like the wind that clears the branches after a heavy snow,

or giving us the will to persevere in difficult times,

like a breeze that cools the brow on a sultry summer afternoon,

then we open our souls to the grace of God.

And love pours in.

And the kingdom of God comes near to us.

This is what we work for.

This is what we wait for.

This is what we yearn for.

So be watchful;

Be mindful;

And be prepared.

Times have changed.

We will never be the same again.

The wind of the Holy Spirit is rising.

What it will teach us will be God's word

if we have the wisdom to hear.

Where it will take us will be God's will

if we have the courage to follow.

So God grant us both wisdom and courage enough.

Amen.