

Reflection on the Gospel-Easter 6C
(John 14:23-29)

-Veronica Lawson RSM

Keeping one's word is a mark of honour in any society. To be asked to keep someone else's word, as in today's gospel reading, calls for a shift in our usual patterns of thinking and acting. In the prologue to the gospel, John has presented Jesus as the Word, the *Logos* who has been with God from the beginning. Jesus is the word of God in human form, the embodiment of God's communication with the world. Jesus also speaks God's word. The disciples are to demonstrate their love for Jesus by keeping the word that he both embodies and articulates. In other words, they are to live as Jesus has lived and be faithful to what he has taught in God's name. Each will thus become a dwelling place for the divine. The implications of this teaching are overwhelming. It seems to me that if we truly believed and "kept" the words of the Johannine Jesus, we might understand that God dwells with us, and so consistently treat each other with the utmost reverence and respect.

Jesus refers once more to his imminent departure. When he is no longer physically present, God's Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will be with them. The Greek word translated as "advocate" carries a range of meanings. It literally means "one called alongside to help" whenever necessary. In other words, the disciples need not be troubled or afraid because they are never alone. The Holy Spirit, the Advocate, is always with them to defend them, to intercede for them, to comfort them, as well as to keep them focussed on all that Jesus has said to them. Earlier in this chapter of John's gospel, the Advocate is called the Spirit of Truth who remains with them and is actually in them. Only through the power of the Spirit will the disciples be empowered to "keep the word" of Jesus.

Once again, Jesus gifts his friends, this time with the gift of peace, a peace "that the world cannot give." In John's gospel, the "world" is first and foremost the tenting place of God's Word: it is God's creation. Occasionally, as in this passage, it refers to whatever is opposed to Jesus as God's Word. The gift of peace that Jesus brings is a peace that casts out fear. It carries all the weight of the Hebrew *shalom*: it brings total well-being and peace of mind. True peace comes from being centred in the Triune God. As Jesus leaves them, the proper stance for the disciples is joy in the knowledge that, although he is going away, he is also "coming to them" since the "Father" will send the Spirit to be with them. The gospel reading thus leaves us to reflect on the unfathomable mystery of God.