

**SERMON FOR EVENING PRAYER<sup>1</sup>**  
**ST. SIMON AND ST. JUDE (OCTOBER 28)**

**The Rev. Warren E. Shaw, Priest-in-Charge**

**Lessons:**<sup>2</sup>

**The First Lesson:** Here beginneth the thirty-second Chapter of the Fifth Book of Moses, called Deuteronomy.<sup>3</sup>

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

Here endeth the First Lesson.

**The Second Lesson:** Here beginneth the fifteenth Verse of the fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to St. John.<sup>4</sup>

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith [SETH] unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto

him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence."

Here endeth the Second Lesson.

**Text:**

From the Second Lesson: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."<sup>5</sup>

**Homily:**

Today's Second Lesson was undoubtedly chosen because of its one brief reference to "Judas, not Iscariot", that is, St. Jude. But the principle topic of this passage is the Holy Spirit. It is particularly on Pentecost that, throughout Western Christendom, the Church focuses its attention on the Holy Spirit. The rest of the year, with the exception of the Pentecostals or the Charismatics, we tend to focus our attention elsewhere.

To my mind, that is not necessarily a bad thing, because, as I understand it, the function of the Holy Spirit is to direct our attention, not to Himself, but to Christ. “He will bear witness to me,” says Jesus. “He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

The linking of the Holy Spirit to the person of Jesus distinguishes Christian spirituality from all the other spiritualities that are in the world today. You have no doubt heard people talk about discovering their spirituality, or finding their spiritual center, or seeking it in some nature religion or some mystical Eastern religion or some religious cult or some New Age discovery. I know I have heard people talk about how they are “spiritual but not religious”.

The fact is that there are many spirits and many spiritualities in the world, and not all of them are benevolent. St. Paul says that we should test the spirits to see if they are of God. The way to do that is to see if they glorify Christ. Any spirit that does not bring us into the presence of Christ does not proceed from the Father, and any spirit that produces chaos rather than order is definitely not holy.

The opening verses of the Bible introduce the Holy Spirit in this way: “The earth was without form and void (empty) and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters.” That movement of the Holy Spirit prepared the earth to receive the Word of God, and it was the Word that brought forth order and life and light.

It was the movement of that same Spirit that prepared the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary to receive the implanted Word of God. The same Holy Spirit hovered over the water at the baptism of Jesus, when the Word of God once again entered in. Immediately the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness and brought Him face to face with the Evil One.

The Holy Spirit came with power on Pentecost and enabled the masses to receive the Word of God, each man in his own native language, and that same Holy Spirit makes it possible for each of us to hear and respond to the Word.

The Evil One has a way of trying to keep us apart by erecting barriers of race and language and sexuality and social position. But the Holy Spirit breaks down those barriers by calling us together in the name of Jesus. As St. Paul puts it, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Jesus says, “Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” So by calling us together in the name of Jesus, the Holy Spirit once again makes Christ present.

It is the Holy Spirit Who enables us to pray. As St. Paul says in Romans, “We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with moaning that is too deep for words.” So it is that the leader of prayer in the assembly of the faithful begins with the words *Dominus vobiscum*, which can be rendered in English as *the Lord be with you* or as *the Lord is with you*. The people respond with *et cum spiritu tuo*, which means *and with thy spirit*. That little exchange assures us that the Holy Spirit has prepared us to receive the presence of Christ and to pray in His name.

We say in the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit “spake by the prophets.” The Law and the Prophets constitute the Holy Scriptures of which Jesus said, “They testify of me.” To say that the Bible is inspired means literally that the Spirit of God is in it.

The Holy Spirit not only enabled the Bible to be written, he also enables the faithful to hear it as the Word of God and brings us once again into the presence of Christ, who is the living Word. Finally, the Holy Spirit makes Christ present when the priest calls upon the Father to “bless and sanctify by thy Word and Holy Spirit” the gifts of bread and wine which belong to the order of creation.

In the chapter following today’s Second Lesson, Jesus says, “When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.” Then He adds, “and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with me from the beginning.”

You and I were not with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry, but the same Holy Spirit that enabled the Apostles to bear witness to Christ was conferred upon each of us by their successors when we were confirmed. St. Paul says in Corinthians, “No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.”

The Apostles are instructed at the end of Matthew’s Gospel to go into the whole world and make disciples of all people. But at the end of Luke’s Gospel they are told to wait until the Holy Spirit comes upon them. That same Holy Spirit who came with such power at Pentecost is out there today preparing the hearts of many people to receive the Word of God. Some of those people are waiting for you to deliver that Word.

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St. David’s Anglican Catholic Church  
Charlottesville, Virginia

June 12, 2011

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<sup>1</sup> “Any set of Psalms and Lessons appointed for the evening of any day may be read at the morning service, and any set of morning Psalms and Lessons may be read in the evening.” *Concerning the Service of the Church*, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER viii (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>2</sup> *Psalms and Lessons for the Fixed Holy Days* (1943), THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER xlv (PECUSA 1928, rev. 1943).

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 32:1-4 (KJV).

<sup>4</sup> St. John 14:15-end (KJV).

<sup>5</sup> St. John 14:26 (KJV).