

Holy Paraclete, Batman

May 31, 2009

(The Day of Pentecost - Year B)

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Waco, Texas

Last Friday night, just like many other Americans, I watched the passing of a torch.

Last Friday night, I watched the Tonight Show, as Jay Leno broadcast his last show as the host of the Tonight Show.

On this last show, one of Jay Leno's guests was Conan O'Brien.

And tomorrow night, Conan O'Brien will take over as the new host of the Tonight Show.

Last Friday night, there was a peaceful passing of the torch - from Jay Leno to Conan O'Brien.

Both men were gracious and thankful.

Both men were characteristically funny.

And Jay Leno did a good job of making the viewers feel like it is to our advantage that new blood and a new host are coming to the Tonight Show.

Jay Leno, in his final night as host, assured us that it is to our advantage that he go away.

In the Gospel of John, on his final night on this earth, on his final night as host, Jesus tells us this:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth:

It is to your advantage that I go away,

For if I did not go away,

The Advocate will not come to you;

But if I go, I will send him to you.”

Jesus, in his final night as host, assures us that it is to our advantage that he go away.

Because, when Jesus does go away, he sends the Spirit of truth, the Advocate.

Now the actual word that Jesus uses, in Greek, is not “Advocate.”

The actual word that Jesus uses is “Paraclete.”

Jesus assures us that after he is gone, he will send us the Paraclete.

That word, “Paraclete,” has been translated in many different ways.

Some translations of the Bible call the Paraclete, the Advocate.

Other translations of the Bible call the Paraclete:

The Counselor, or the Comforter, or the Helper, or the Spirit of Truth.

Folks say that the Paraclete that Jesus sends after he goes away is also called the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, in his final night as host on this earth, assures us that it is to our advantage that he go away.

It is to our advantage - because Jesus will then send us the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into the truth.

Today is the Day of Pentecost.

Today is the day when we celebrate that the Holy Spirit was poured out upon all, with a mighty wind and with tongues of fire, which is why we have tongues of fire pinned on us today.

Today we celebrate that the torch is passed, not just from Jay Leno to Conan O’Brien.

But today is the day when we celebrate that the fiery torch is passed - from Jesus to the Paraclete.

For it is to our advantage that Jesus has gone away, because now we have the Paraclete, the Counselor, the Comforter, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to guide us into all truth.

Yesterday morning, I was the first one awake in our house.

I stumbled out of bed and went out the front door to grab the morning newspaper.

As I walked down our front walk, noticing these cool mornings that we have been enjoying,

Something made my head turn to the left, toward our next door neighbor’s front yard.

As I glanced to the left, my eyes saw amazing beams of sunlight, streaming in from the rising sun, changing the air into the color of honey, surrounded by a chamber of mist.

For one split second, I thought it was God.

Then, in the next instant, I began to analyze the vision, wondering if the

beams of sunlight were just magnified by a sprinkler system going off, shooting a fine mist into the air.

My curiosity was peaked, so much so that I began to walk closer to their yard, to see if it really was the sprinkler system that had caused this beautiful vision of sunlight.

However, the sprinkler system was not running at all.

And by the time I had analyzed the situation, the sunlight streaming through the trees did not look extraordinary - but just like plain old sunlight.

I believe that the spirits of this world cause us to pick apart and analyze to death every vision and encounter and mystery that we have with God.

But, it is the Spirit of truth, the Paraclete, that guides us into all truth. Now, you all might think I am crazy, but I do believe that yesterday morning the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, showed me a brief glimpse of the glory of God, found in that vision of golden sunlight on a cool morning.

The Gospel of John is the only New Testament source to mention the Paraclete as the Spirit of truth.

Yet one of the foundational truths of the Gospel of John is discovered in the very first chapter of that book.

John proclaims in that very first chapter:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And we have seen his glory...full of grace and truth.”¹

A foundational truth of the Christian faith is that God is *not* absent from us, but God lives and dwells among us.

The Spirit of truth will guide us to see that God is everywhere and in everyone.

Yet the spirit of lies, the spirits of this world, want us to believe that God is *not* among us, but is very, very far away.

The spirits of this world tell us that the pictures we see from the Hubble telescope are just stars and gases and galaxies, light years away,

¹ John 1:14

only to be measured and explained by mathematics and science.
But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit of truth, shows us that the images from
the Hubble telescope are really the hand of God.
The spirits of this world tell us that the working poor that live in our
very own city are a problem for our society and our government.
But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit of truth, shows us that the working
poor are really Jesus, the migrant worker from Nazareth.
The spirits of this world tell us that God is distant and is rarely seen.
But the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit of truth, shows us that God is as close
and visible as the honeyed rays of sunlight that I saw yesterday
morning.

You see, when Jesus was walking on this earth, God was a thirty-
something year old Jewish man with sandals on his feet.
But now, it is to our advantage that Jesus has gone away.
Because now that we have the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit of truth, we can
now see God in everything and in everyone.

For the truth is that God becomes flesh and dwells among us -
In a spider that weaves an intricate, circular web,
And in the teenager who sacks our groceries at HEB,
And in the ten perfect toes of a newborn baby.
The truth is that God becomes flesh and dwells among us - in a loaf of
bread and in a cup of wine.

On this Day of Pentecost, it is to your advantage that Jesus has gone
away.
It is to your advantage that the torch of Jesus has been passed to a new
host.
It is to your advantage that the Paraclete has been poured out on you.

It is to your advantage that the Holy Spirit of truth will show us
That Jesus now lives and dwells - in you.

AMEN.