**Sermon Second Sunday in Easter, 2021**

**Jesus appeared in a house where the disciples were hidden with the doors locked. Jesus simply came and stood among the disciples.  How he entered the house is not explained; did he walk through the locked door?  We simply don’t know.  Yet somehow, he was among his disciples and said to them twice, “Peace be with you, Peace be with you.” Then Jesus said to them “Receive the Spirit”, which was an incredibly special gift for each of the disciples.  He told them they could forgive the sins of anyone, but they could also not forgive anyone’s sins. That was a gift to the disciples, and I would believe must have been somewhat of a burden. Jesus had given them the power to judge, to decide who deserved to be forgiven their sins and who didn’t.**

**Jesus must have trusted the disciples a whole lot. Because throughout all of history, from that time forward, Jesus never gave anyone the right to discern who should be forgiven their sins and who should not. Yet Jesus did give anyone of us from the time he walked the earth a wonderful gift. He left us the advocate to help us through our bad times, our good times and our in-between times.  He gave us our advocate, the Holy Spirit. Yet sometimes it’s difficult to understand how the Holy Spirit works through us humans. Perhaps these two quotations expressing some thoughts about how others have experienced the Holy Spirit will help us all to better understand the mystery we call the Holy Spirit.  Pope Francis describes the Holy Spirit this way, “To put it simply: the Holy Spirit bothers us. Because he moves us, he makes us walk, he pushes the Church to go forward.”**

**It seems to me the Holy Sprit not only pushes the church to move forward, the special advocate pushed us too. Sometimes I have experienced the Holy Spirit as a Jiminy Cricket on my shoulder or really in my head.  Quietly pushing me forward and never giving up on me, eventually hearing what I’m asked to do. I imagine each of us has had some sort of a nudging from the Holy Spirit, and we might say something at first such as “what”, or “not me.”  But the Holy Spirit is persistent, and I have found never bossy, just extremely persistent.**

**Another way I find the Holy Spirit talking to me is when I start rationalizing what I’m doing. Somehow, I always know when I start rationalizing what I’m doing is not for the highest or the best, but often it takes me awhile to stop rationalizing and telling myself what I’m doing is really all right. I imagine many people have also rationalized something they’re doing until that persistent inner voice becomes impossible to ignore.  I know there are as many ways we can hear the Holy Spirit as there are people, and as Pope Francis said, “To put it simply: the Holy Spirit bothers us…”  The advocate pushes us to help us reach our highest and best self.**

**I’ve never heard of this man, but I certainly agree with his quotation.**[**Oswald J. Smith**](https://www.azquotes.com/author/26117-Oswald_J_Smith)**said, “Let me say that it is not a question of us getting more of the Holy Spirit, but rather of the Holy Spirit getting more of us.”  Yes, I believe this to be true, the Holy Spirit nudges us to help us turn more to God.  Because the more we let the Trinity into our lives, the happier and more fulfilled we become.  This has been my experience repeatedly throughout my life.   Yet the Holy Spirit dosen’t only come to us in nudges or as a Jiminy Cricket on our shoulder. The Holy Spirit also comes to us in moments and ways Jung called a “synchronicity moment”, or meaningful moments when God reaches out to help us.   Synchronicity moments might be as simple as a friend just happening to call us when we’re working on a difficult life decision and the friend is able to help us clarify our thoughts. I know from long experience, the Holy Spirit attempts many different ways to reach out to us to help us grow into who we are to be.**

**I have at times in my life wanted to see and hear a lovely red tail hawk guiding across the sky calling out its unique song.  I’ve quietly said to myself, “Oh I’d like to see a red tail Hawk fly across the sky, and all of a sudden one appears high in the sky singing its song. For me that is simply a gift from the Holy Spirit, reminding me the advocate is always near to any of us when we call upon the Holy Spirit, even in a wishful quiet way. The Holy Spirit is not only there to nudge us on toward the arms of God, the Sprit is with us to encourage us and help us**

**I’ve always loved these words written by St. Paul in Romans. “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”**. **Isn’t it wonderful to know God loves us so much, after Jesus was about to leave our earth, he gave us the Holy Spirit. Our advocate to nudge us along our journies, to help us through our hard times, to nuture us and always be there for us. The love of God is beyond anything we can possibly imagine in our human forms.  A love that encompasses every one of us and never lets us go.**

**Jesus left us the advocate the Holy Spirit to help us when we forget we’re God’s beloved children.  I can only speak of my own experiences, yet I know I’m not unique or special, and that many of us have had the same experiences.  For me, as t turn to God in the simple everyday tasks of life, over time I have noticed how much happier I become.  More content to enjoy the loveliness of the here and now, rather then fretting about what could happen tomorrow. Or all the things I don’t have and all the places I haven’t been. The Holy Spirit comes to me as quickly as a beloved song remembered.  I pray the Sprit comes to all of you.  To help each one of us know the love of God is infinite and never ending. Amen**