

The Spirit Disguised

This Week's Readings at Mass

- ▶ Acts 8:5-8, 14-17 - Philip in Samaria
- ▶ 1 Peter 3:15-18 - On Christian suffering
- ▶ John 14:15-21 - Promise of the Paraclete

While much of the book of the Acts of the Apostles follows the work and travels of Peter and Paul, today's passage tells us that other believers were doing healing work in Jesus' name too. In this case, Philip ventured out of the Jewish crowds to go to the city of Samaria, a place that historically many Jews avoided. Samaritans shared some of the history and beliefs of the Jews but were seen as traitors to the faith, partly because they refused to go to Jerusalem for worship. That didn't phase Philip or slow God's work, though, because the Samaritans eagerly received "the word of God" and became believers in Christ too. The story has echoes of the Samaritans who quickly came to believe in Jesus after the woman at the well introduced them to him.

This Gospel reading picks up just a few verses after last week's Gospel left off. Jesus is still speaking to the disciples on the night before he dies. The disciples are still worried and concerned by Jesus' predictions of betrayal and denial. Jesus continues to reassure them, now introducing the promise of the Holy Spirit, sometimes called the "Advocate" or the "Paraclete."

Just as Jesus explained to Philip in last Sunday's Gospel reading (that Philip already knew the Father because Philip knew Jesus), he explains that the apostles also already know the Spirit. Like those confused disciples, we might first protest that we don't know the Spirit either. If we pay attention to our experiences, though, and think back to times when we have instinctively known the truth or what was the right thing to do, we can spot how the Spirit was



"He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth."

Sheepish Question:

As you pray to the Holy Spirit, are you more attentive to the gifts you receive or to the giver?

with us. Maybe we had a flash of insight, or someone said something that we instantly recognized as right for us, or we had an unexplained experience of comfort or strength in a difficult situation. Those experiences are experiences of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, present and working within us.

Questions of the Week

- 1 When have you had an experience of the Holy Spirit's presence or guidance, even if you didn't recognize it at the time?
- 2 When have you had an experience of feeling peace, comfort, or strength despite an outward struggle you were experiencing?

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