

**Cantate (The Fifth Sunday of Easter)**  
**3 May 2026**  
**John 16:5-15 (Isaiah 12:1-6, James 1:16-21)**

**Nevertheless**

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—Amen

The text for this morning's sermon is the Holy Gospel appointed for today from the Holy Gospel According to St. John, the sixteenth chapter.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

Alleluia! Christ is risen! (He is risen indeed! Alleluia!)

Early in today's Holy Gospel, Jesus says, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth."

This week's Holy Gospel—like last week's—takes us back to Holy Thursday. For the second week in a row, our Gospel reading involves Jesus preparing His disciples for a change in how things are going to work. He is going to be crucified, rise from the dead, and then forty days after His resurrection, He will ascend into heaven. The disciples are being kicked out of the nest (so to speak) and will have to fly on their own. They're about to graduate and will no longer be students. They will make the transition from disciples to apostles, from hearers to preachers, from seminarians to pastors.

No man in his right mind would not be terrified by this. And Jesus recognizes their fear. And so, He assures them that He is not disappearing from them. And it is important for us to remember that He has not disappeared from us either.

Jesus is the Word made flesh, and He is present wherever and whenever His Word is proclaimed, and His flesh and blood are present. In other words, Jesus is here with us, in this space and at this time, whenever two or three are gathered for the Divine Service, when His

Word is read and preached and taught and heard, and when His Holy Supper is distributed “for the forgiveness of sins.”

Our Lord also sends us a “Helper” to guide us through the perils of life in this fallen world, to point us to that which is right and true, to lead us out of temptation, to draw us to the Holy Scriptures and the Sacraments, and to direct us to our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And this Helper is the Holy Spirit, who was poured out upon the Church at Pentecost when the Word of God exploded into every corner of the world, defying even the barriers of tribe and tongue.

And even though the idea of their graduation, and of their beloved Teacher ascending into heaven, and of all the changes which all of this would bring to them—which for nearly all of them would include martyrdom of some sort—it all causes sorrow to fill their hearts, “Nevertheless,” says our Lord, comforting them with His Word, with His promise, “Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away.” For in this change, the Holy Spirit would accomplish things through the work of the apostles which at that moment, they could not even imagine.

And this is what “faith” is: Faith is believing without absolute proof. Now, there are many people who mock faith, many people think that faith is primitive and contrary to science. But these very same people will walk into a dark room and flip on the light switch. Why do they do this? Because they fully expect the light to go on. They have faith that this will happen. They cannot absolutely know that this will happen—and indeed, sometimes it doesn’t. But nevertheless, they still live by faith in something...

...or faith in someone. Every time someone cashes a paycheck, he is putting faith in the promise of another person: faith that his employer will indeed convert that piece of paper, bearing a promise and a signature, into money.

The point is simply this: we all live by faith. It would be impossible to function without faith—because, you see, we live in a present which is always moving into the future. And we have faith in what our eyes and ears tell us. Even walking a single step is an act of faith.

And so, Jesus calls His disciples—including us—to put our faith in Him, to trust Him. He is the Creator of the world. There is a plan. He's got it all under control—even when it looks like it isn't. And to keep us in the faith, the Holy Spirit—the same Spirit of God who hovered over the waters in the beginning, and who hovers over the baptismal waters which were applied to us—the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” “This is most certainly true,” for He is, as our Lord calls Him, “the Spirit of truth,” and our Lord Himself says, “I tell you the truth.”

This is our culture's current crisis, dear friends. We live in an age in which people believe that there is no truth, but rather that there are many truths. If two plus two equal four for you, well then, that's great for you. But you'd better not jam your mathematics down other people's throats. For who are you to judge if another person's truth is that two plus two equal five? Of course, with math like that, you might not want to drive over any bridges. Of course, this example is absurd. But it truly is ironic, how we can have such a strong faith in things such as technology and at the same time deny that there's absolute truth.

We can have faith, dear friends, precisely because we believe that there is a truth, an objective reality which transcends our desires, our feelings, and even our existence. Isn't it interesting that when our Lord was put on trial before Pontius Pilate—just a few hours following this discourse with His disciples—the tormented governor asked Jesus, “What is truth?” The Truth was standing before him with flesh and blood. Jesus is the Truth.

And so, we believe that Jesus is telling us the truth, and we believe that the Holy Spirit guides us into truth, and we believe that our struggles in this world are truly to our advantage—even when we are tempted to think otherwise. For no matter how grim things are, how divided our culture and our country have become—our Lord Jesus Christ has it all under control. The Holy Spirit is guiding us to where we need to be, where it is to our “advantage.” The Greek word which John uses here—the one translated as “advantage”—carries the sense of: “lots of things working together for good.”

So, think about it. Think about all the little things in your life: this decision, that happenstance, this chance meeting of a person, that choice instead of the other choice—which all conspired to bring you to eternal life in Christ Jesus. How arrogant we are if we think that we did this. How silly it would be to claim that we made some kind of decision for Christ. All the while, the Holy Spirit has, by the Word, guided you into all truth, and led you to Jesus Christ, who forgives your sins, who makes you into a new person, who promises you victory over death and the grave, who offers you His body and blood to eat and to drink, who hunts you down like a Shepherd, and keeps you in the one true flock by means of His Word and Spirit.

And Jesus knows that we can’t handle everything all at once. And so He asks us to trust Him, one step at a time, as all of those little things are worked to your good, to your advantage. Jesus asks you to trust Him, and He sends us the Holy Spirit as a mentor, a guide, and a true Helper. For “when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth.”

And that, dear friends, is what the Christian life is all about: a relentless search for the truth—not your truth, not my truth, not some silly fantasy that two plus two equal five. Rather, we want to know what is objectively and eternally true: how we got here, why the world is the

way it is—including us—and where are we going. To desire anything less than the truth is to deny to ourselves what it means to be truly human.

And so we are led by the Spirit, led to Jesus, led to the Holy Trinity in whom we have communion, to the God who created us, the God who loves us, the God who redeems us, the God who brings us to Himself—where we will live eternally as we were meant to live. This is where we are headed in this little ship we call the Church. This is where we are all being led in this little flock following our Good Shepherd. This is what awaits us when all the little pieces come together—all to our advantage: “All that the Father has is Mine,” says our Lord Jesus, “therefore, I said that He will take what is mine and declare it to you.” To you, dear friends.

And this is the truth which has been revealed by Jesus by means of the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Scripture, and received by your believing hearts. Though we cannot bear to hear all of the truth now, this is the truth which our Lord declared to the disciples and declares again to us.

And although, in this fallen world, sorrow fills our hearts, “Nevertheless,” says Jesus, “I tell you the truth.” There is one most blessed truth which overcomes all the sorrow which fills our hearts. That is the truth from Jesus’ lips to your ears that you are forgiven for all your sins. In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus—Amen