



Reflection on the Scriptures of the Day

*By Deacon Phil Belt
of Holy Cross Parish*

Tuesday of the Sixth Week of Easter

"And when he comes..."

The disciples were bewildered and grief-stricken. All they knew was that they were going to lose Jesus, but he told them that in the end this was all for the best, because, afterwards, the Holy Spirit would come. So what is the Holy Spirit supposed to do? It is three-fold:

- The Holy Spirit will convict people of sin. In an Indian village, a missionary was telling the story of Christ by means of slides projected on the whitewashed wall of a village house. When the picture of the cross was shown, one man stepped forward, as if he could not help it, and cried, "Come down! I should be hanging there—not you." Why should the sight of a man crucified as a criminal in Palestine 2,000 years ago tear open the hearts of people throughout the centuries, and still today? It is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit will convince people of righteousness. It becomes clear what this means when we understand it is Jesus Christ's righteousness of which they will be convinced. Jesus was crucified as a criminal. He was tried and found guilty; he was regarded by the Jews as an evil heretic, and by the Romans as a dangerous character; he was given the punishment that the worst criminals had to suffer. What made people see in this crucified figure the Son of God, as the centurion saw at the cross (Matthew 27:54) and Paul on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1–9)? It is amazing that we put our trust for all eternity in a crucified Jewish criminal. It is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who convinces people of the sheer righteousness of Christ, backed by the fact that Jesus rose again and went to his Father.
- The Holy Spirit convinces people of judgment. On the cross, evil stands condemned and defeated. What makes us feel certain that judgment lies ahead? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives us the inner and unshakable conviction that we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.

When we are convicted of our own sin, when we are convinced of Christ's righteousness, and when we are convinced of judgment to come, what gives us the certainty that we will find our salvation in the cross of Christ, and that, with Christ, we are forgiven and saved from judgment? This, too, is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who convinces us and makes us sure that in this crucified figure we can find our Savior and our Lord. The Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and convinces us of our Savior.