

Sermon for Easter 6.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus himself gives them the Holy Spirit which John calls the comforter and The spirit of truth. He says in verse 17: This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

John gives us a very explicit promise about truth. It will be within us because we know the advocate who dwells within us. We call this "The Holy Spirit." It is very similar, perhaps identical to the incarnate Jesus Christ who said, "I am the truth and the way." "If you know me, you know the father. If you have seen me, you have seen the father." All this is mitigated somewhat by St. Paul's observation that in this life we see dimly, but in the future, we will see clearly face to face. That suggests that without the advocate dwelling within us it is still possible to see distorted reflections. I recently learned first hand what it means to see things through a distorted lens. Two weeks ago I had cataract removal from both eyes. I am truly surprised that I was seeing the world through distorted lenses. Eye glasses gave me some correction but they could not light up the world with the brilliance that my new synthetic lens revealed. If you have not had this surgery, I have to warn you, get ready for a minor shock when you see your own face clearly face to face. Without cataracts, my face looks 20 years older. It is a shock. But then the truth is often shocking.

Is it any wonder that we avoid the truth about ourselves and the things and people we're wedded to. At a very early age, whenever someone approached me with the warning that "Charles, I'm going to be honest with you," I braced myself for a psychological assault. Why in the world would someone think I want them to be honest with me. I already know more about myself than I want to know. I dislike the same things in me that other people dislike, and if I could I would give up those offensive behaviors and be exactly what people find most charming about me. My understanding of myself does not mean that I can change my nature. My question is, "Can you stand me as I am?" My friends can stand me or they would not still be my friends. The big question is, "Can God stand me?"

On a good day when I'm having good luck and life has meaning I think God can stand me. But there are bad days; I mean really bad days when a friend dies or I learn that I have to have another root canal then I ask myself the question that all men ask themselves, "Why me Oh Lord? Why me?"

Is God testing me? Am I testing God? According to the scripture today God and we are no longer separate. We have merged, God and us. He in us; we in him. Jesus has not left us alone without him, without a comforter. Jesus has left us an interior person of the Trinity.

So the question is not about testing or being accepted. The question is can we accept what we know? Can we accept what we see now, clearly without cataracts, without distortion, face to face? The truth?

My friend Sid Oakley likes to call it the difference between the lie and the truth. The lie is doing it yourself, your way and the secular way, the way of the world. The truth is that if and when we accept Jesus Christ, (the way, the truth and the life) then we come to the father and we accept the comforting spirit who dwells within us.

The truth is not comfortable for us because we have not become that ideal person our mamas promised us we could be. We are still flawed, imperfect, sinners not quite what we want to be and yet Paul and Jesus say we are accepted and now joined with Christ, he in us, we in him. Now all we have to do is stand the truth which we see face to face. Jesus says we are acceptable as we are. We are now ready to accept Jesus the way as he is.

But which Jesus shall we accept? The perfect man, the divine God made man or the servant leader, the healer who touches lepers and prostitutes and comforts them, eats with them and really does accept them as they are. The problem is if the sinners accept him as he is, they are changed; to perfection? No, they are changed to followers of the way of Jesus. Sinners become God's servants, apostles, foot washers and teachers. And what do we get for this. We get a friend, Jesus Christ the redeemer living within us, here and now. We need never feel estranged from God again . . . if we can accept what we see now, clearly face to

face.

But accepting ourselves is not quite enough. We also have to accept others as they are, as they are; in fact we have to accept the whole world as it is, clearly face to face. We can no longer wait for the world and its people to be made pure, sinless and perfect in our eyes. The truth of life is the world is as it is, the way God made it. That is the way of Jesus. That is the cross, the true cross, the cross he wants us to pick up and follow him, on his way and on our way.