

# **Gospel Reading Group**

## **Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year A)**

### **John 14:15–21**

#### **About today:**

*The readings for the Sixth Sunday of Easter (Year A) draw us into the quiet but profound promise of God's abiding presence.*

*In the first reading (Acts 8:5-8, 14-17), the early Church begins to extend beyond its boundaries, as the Spirit works through the apostles to bring new believers into communion. The second reading (1 Peter 3:15-18) reminds us that Christ's suffering has opened the way to God, and that we are called to live not in fear, but in gentle confidence and hope. In the Gospel (John 14:15-21), Jesus consoles his disciples with the promise of the Advocate – the Holy Spirit – who will remain with them, guiding, teaching, and dwelling within them.*

*Together, these readings invite us to trust that we are never alone: God is with us, within us, and continually drawing us deeper into his life.*

## **Gospel Reading**

*Read the whole passage slowly a few times, keeping one or two minutes of silence between each time. As you listen, notice if a word or phrase stands out to you. Stay with it.*

<sup>14:15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.

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.

18 “I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you.

19 In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live.

20 On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

21 They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them.”

## **Broader Picture:**

This Sunday's Gospel (John 14:15–21) continues directly from last week's reading in chapter 14, keeping us within the intimate setting of the Last Supper discourse.

As we listen to these words two weeks before the great Solemnity of Pentecost, the focus gently shifts toward the promise of the Holy Spirit – the Advocate who will remain with the disciples after Jesus' departure.

Within the wider shape of Gospel of John, this passage sits at a pivotal moment: Jesus prepares his disciples for his absence, yet assures them of a deeper, interior presence – *“I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”* It is a promise not only of consolation for the disciples who will not be able to see the Lord as they used to after the Ascension, but of communion with him and the Father, through the Spirit which will come to dwell withing the Church.

## **Interpretation Notes:**

**v.15:** “*If you love me...*” Love, in the Christian sense is never merely emotional; it’s not cozy feelings and butterflies in the stomach. Love is relational and it manifested in both will and actions. So, to love the Lord, means to follow his teachings and to do what he commands us to do.

On this Saint John Chrysostom notes that Christ does not begin with commandments but with love, because obedience flows from relationship with him.

Saint Augustine of Hippo Augustine of Hippo repeatedly emphasises that love of God and obedience to him are inseparable. Thus, one of his most quoted phrases – “*Love, and do what you will*” (In Epistolam Ioannis ad Parthos Tractatus, VII.8) – is not as licence to “feel” love and then do whatever we want, but a reminder that if we have true love for God means to be already aligned with God’s will.

**v.16:** “...*he will give you another Advocate...*” The “*another Advocate*” (the *Paraclete*, sometimes translated as Helper) indicates both continuity and distinction: the Holy Spirit continues Christ’s work within the hearts of believers and within the Church as the body of Christ.

**v.17:** “...*the Spirit of truth...*” Although there are mentions of the Spirit in earlier chapters, it is only here that Jesus defines the Holy as “*the Spirit of truth*”. This is deeply significant. In John’s Gospel, “truth” (*alētheia*) is not abstract correctness but the full revelation of God in Christ (as we read last week, Jesus affirms, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life*” — John 14:6).

So, the Spirit is not bringing a different message but making present and intelligible the truth that is Christ himself. As Saint Basil the Great writes:

“*The Spirit leads us... to the knowledge of the Son, who is the Truth*”  
(*On the Holy Spirit*, 18.47).

**v.17:** “...he will be in you” Twice in two verses Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will abide with believers. This affirmation highlights the fact that the Spirit does not simply come to inform the mind, but he comes to form believers into the truth, aligning hearts and life with Christ. This work, both at the centre of the Church’s mission and key to each individual life of faith, is continuous until the return of Christ.

**v.18:** “I will not leave you orphaned...” The “orphan” imagery highlights the relational dimension: salvation is adoption and participation into Jesus’ own divine sonship.

**v.19:** “...but you will see me.” To “see” Christ is not merely to observe him, but to participate in his life. The world (in Johannine terms, humanity closed in on itself) cannot see Christ beyond the historical, earthly reality, but through the Spirit dwelling within the Church, the disciples will be able to still “see” Jesus and participate in his risen and divine existence.

**v.19:** “...because I live, you also will live.” The second part of the verse strengthens the argument made by Jesus. Seeing him, participating in his risen and divine life, will also give life to the disciples (to all believers). The phrase “because I live” is crucial: Christ’s life is not independent of ours. The Church Fathers see here a deeply corporate and organic unity. For example, Saint Hilary of Poitiers notes:

*“We live through Him, because He has taken our nature into Himself”  
(On the Trinity, 9.10).*

Within the wider theology of the Gospel of John, eternal life (the life of the age to come) is consistently present here-and-now and relational, not merely future. Verse 19 fits into a pattern: the disciples already begin to live the life of the age to come through union with Christ. And what will be fully revealed in resurrection is already “seeded” now in the disciples through faith, through the indwelling Spirit, and (as the tradition strongly emphasises) through the sacraments.

**v.20:** *“On that day you will know...”* The first part of the verse points towards the future full consummation (at the resurrection) of the disciples’ union with Christ as they are invited to share within the life of the Trinity. However, that union already starts in the present time, through the action of the Spirit to progressively form the life of Christ in believers. This concept of looking towards the final revelation of what is already at play is found also in the First Letter of John:

*“Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.”* 1John 3:2

**v.20:** *“...you in me, and I in you...”* This is one of the clearest expressions of mutual indwelling (*perichoresis* extended to believers). St Hilary writes:

*“We are in Him through the flesh which He assumed, and He in us through the sacrament”* (*On the Trinity*, 8.13).

**v.21:** *“They who have my commandments and keep them...”* The passage returns full circle: love, obedience, and revelation are inseparable.

**v.21:** *“...those who love me will be loved by my Father ...”* The second part of the verse could be interpreted, at first, as to affirm that those who do not keep the commandments are not loved by the Father or by the Son.

However, this would also mean that God’s love can be won or merited through strict obedience to divine rules... and this goes against the wider understanding of God’s love found in the Scriptures and the tradition of the Church. For example, 1John 4:11 reads, *“In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins”*; and St Augustine echoes 1John 4:19 by noting: *“We love because He first loved us”* (*Tractates on John*, 102.5).

God's love is not switched on and off. What does change is not God's disposition, but our capacity to receive and live within that love. St Thomas Aquinas makes a key distinction:

*“God loves all, but there is a special love “of friendship” (in the sense of communion with them) toward those who live in grace” (Summa Theologiae, I, q.20, a.3–4).*

In that sense, keeping the commandments does not earn love, but opens us more deeply to it and it places us in a relationship of communion.

So, this verse does not mean that those who fail to keep the commandments are not loved by the Father or the Son. It means that the keeping of the commandments is the pathway into a deeper, conscious participation in that love, where Christ is known, experienced, and revealed from within.

The distinction is not between those who are loved and those who are not, but between love offered and love consciously received and experienced by those who keep the commandments and whose lives are formed into Christ's by the Holy Spirit.

## Questions for this week:

- *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments”*  
How do I understand the relationship between love and obedience in my own life?
- *“I will not leave you orphaned.”*  
Where in my life do I most need to hear and trust that promise of Christ’s abiding presence?
- *“Because I live, you also will live.”*  
How do I understand this promise of life? Is it something I associate only with the future, or can I recognise signs of Christ’s life already at work in me now?
- *“I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.”*  
What does it mean for me, concretely, to live as someone who shares in the life of Christ?



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Interpretation Notes by Father Diego Galanzino for the *Gospel Reading Group* – A discipleship group of the Parish of All Saints’ Houghton Regis, May 2026. [allsaintshr.co.uk/learning](http://allsaintshr.co.uk/learning)