

*'I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth.'*

In ancient Jewish theology, Satan was the adversary of humankind. In particular, he was a prosecutor appearing before the throne of God accusing human beings of their offences and demanding retribution, that the punishment fit the crime.

Our Lord had a very different image of himself in relation to us, the opposite of the satanic prosecutor. In today's Gospel, knowing he was departing from his followers, he says: 'I will send you *another* Advocate to be with you forever.' This means that Our Lord *was* an advocate, and he would send *another*.

As you know, an advocate is a person who stands shoulder to shoulder with someone and pleads their case. That is how Jesus saw himself in relation to his disciples. His role was not to condemn but to plead the case for mercy and compassion, to be the intercessor *par excellence*, to be the best character witness one might ever hope to have. Mathew, St Peter, Mary Magdalene, and so many other grave sinners would vouch for that.

So, let us be glad today that in Jesus we have an advocate who constantly pleads with God on our behalf and who on the cross took on himself our punishment. In these times particularly, when more and more people claim with almost dogmatic certainty that God's patience has run out and he is now punishing the world, we need to fearlessly turn to Jesus and see in him our defender, paraclete, and best advocate.

Moreover, Jesus desires us to be advocates pleading for mercy on behalf of other people. That is why, through St Sister Faustina, Jesus taught us this simple prayer which he hopes we will say regularly: *Eternal Father, for the sake of his sorrowful passion, have mercy on us and on the whole world.*

Our Lord would never want us to act like satanic prosecutors who accuse and condemn the world. You remember what happened when James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven to reduce a Samaritan town to ashes? Jesus turned and sternly rebuked them for judgment belongs to God. Jesus' desire is that we pray for our broken world, always trying to discern good in it.

I am currently reading this book, *Wrestling with God*, written by an Oblate father, Ron Rolheiser. Let me read you a short fragment which, I think, illustrates nicely how we can be advocates of mercy:

*A number of years ago, I was at the funeral of a young man who had died tragically in a car accident. At the time of his death, on the surface, his relationship to his church and to some of its moral teachings was far from ideal: he was not attending church regularly, was living with his girlfriend outside marriage, was not much concerned about the poor or the larger community, and was, in simple terms, partying pretty hard. But everyone who knew him also knew of his essential goodness and his wonderful heart. There wasn't an ounce of malice in him, and heaven would be forever a less colourful and more impoverished place if he weren't there. At the reception following the church service, one of his aunts said to me, "He was such a good person, if I were running the gates of heaven, I would certainly let him in." I assured her that no doubt God felt the same way, given that God's understanding and forgiveness infinitely surpass our own.'*

May the other Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth, enable us to be advocates of mercy, like Jesus. May he also rid our hearts of fear: fear that God is not as understanding and compassionate as we are. Fear that God is not as bighearted as we are. Fear that God does not read the heart and cannot tell the difference between wound and coldness, immaturity and sin. Fear that God gives us only one chance and cannot bear any missteps and infidelities. Fear that God is threatened by our achievements, like a petty tyrant. And, not least, fear that God is as helpless before our moral helplessness as we are.