

05/25/14 6 Easter A

-- A Lutheran pastor recently told a true story about a man named Alex who ran the shop where she gets her car's oil changed. He told her about a six year old boy he knew when he was about twelve. This boy had been bullied by older boys when he walked to school. They would grab him and steal his lunch money.

-- This boy's parents were friends of Alex's parents. So they called them to ask if Alex could walk with their son to school so he wouldn't be bothered by those bullies. And he did that, for a time, to protect him.

-- It turned out that, after they both grew up, that six year old boy ran for Vice President. And, when Alex showed up at one of his campaign rallies, he felt just a little uneasy when he asked Alex not to call him by his boyhood nickname.

-- Alex had served as a type of "advocate" for that little boy, walking by his side and serving as his protector. Though the boy was not literally orphaned (after all, his parents did try to protect him) he probably felt that way when he had walked alone to school, knowing the dangers he faced from those bullies.

-- In the gospel, Jesus promised his disciples that, once he was gone, he would make sure there was someone to walk beside them. We recognize that "someone" as the Holy Spirit.

-- Yes, the Holy Spirit acts somewhat like Alex, an older and stronger person who walks with us through the dangers we encounter in life. For all of us need that protection and assurance. There are times when we probably feel like a young boy or girl walking alone along a path where bullies are lurking to rough us up or steal our lunch money.

-- That need is hard to admit. Like that young boy, now grown up and a confident politician, we find it uncomfortable to confront our neediness.

But that is what we do when we pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and protection from evil.

-- There are other times when we will play the role of Alex, someone who guides another through the challenges of life. That is the classic role of a confirmation sponsor. He or she is there to help guide the person they sponsor. That's particularly true for those facing the challenges of adolescence, of growing up and figuring out a direction in life.

-- We also do that when we mentor a young person, or sit quietly and patiently with a shut in as she talks about the good old days and complains about her aches and pains.

-- As St. Peter tells us, we are an "advocate" when we give others the reasons why we believe in Jesus Christ and the life he promises us. Many of us are called to walk others through their journey of faith, with understanding and patience.

-- Yes, we are all in need of the power of the Holy Spirit. All of us face times when the issues of life threaten to pounce on us like a bullies ready to steal a young boy's lunch money.

-- God invites us to take refuge in the power of our Advocate, the Holy Spirit. For God promises that he will not leave us orphaned. God will walk by our side and, if necessary, carry us through those dangers that threaten to make us give up hope.

-- And, at times, God will give us the ability to be a guide and advocate for someone else who needs help. After all, if we reflect back on our lives, we can all think of people who have given us guidance at critical times.

-- We can be God's instruments to assure someone else that they will not be orphaned. For God has given us that assurance as well.