

## *Cantate*

John 16:5-15

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In our text today, Jesus is preparing His disciples for His death, resurrection, and ascension. When Jesus accomplishes His work, He ascends to the right hand of the Father where He is in charge of all things. In His place, He sends the Holy Spirit who will create and sustain His church. The Apostles are comforted by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells us the work of the Holy Spirit. There are four things the Holy Spirit will do.

*He will convict the world concerning sin... because they do not believe in me.*

First, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin. Jesus is talking about a very specific sin here. It is true that the Holy Spirit convicts the believer of all sin. He uses the Law of God to show us our sin so that we might repent and receive forgiveness. We wouldn't know our sin without the Holy Spirit applying God's Law to us. As Paul says, "If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, 'You shall not covet.'" (Rom 7:7) Thanks be to God that He loves us and chastises us so that we do not die in our sin and be condemned eternally!

But the sin that Jesus is talking about here concerns the world here and not just believers. I'm sure all of you know an unbeliever who is entirely comfortable in his sin. And Jesus here is talking about a specific sin and not just sin in general. We know that no one is innocent before God. Again, Paul says, "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Rom 3:10-12) This means we all deserve eternal condemnation. When God pronounces judgment upon the unrighteous and condemns them, He is completely just in His judgment. But the sin that condemns you is not what sends you to hell.

Jesus has a very specific sin in mind here. You know it as the unforgivable sin. It is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. (Mt 12:22-32; Lk 11:14-23) The one thing that separates the believer from the unbeliever and the saved from the condemned is belief that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, who comes to save you from your sin. Disbelief in Jesus is the sin that sends someone to eternal damnation. Those who cling to Christ in faith are saved and those who reject Christ are condemned.

How does the Holy Spirit do this work? Through the proclamation of the Church. Moses and the prophets proclaimed Christ in the Old Testament as Jesus teaches the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke. John the Baptist proclaimed repentance for the forgiveness of sin through the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. Jesus proclaimed that He Himself brings the kingdom of heaven through faith in Him. The apostles proclaim Jesus in their writings. We proclaim Jesus through that same apostolic word. And through that Word, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the sin of unbelief.

*He will convict the world concerning righteousness... because I go to the Father.*

First the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin because of unbelief. Second, He convicts the world of righteousness. This is not just any kind of righteousness but a very specific kind.

The world knows about civil righteousness. Even with how confused the world is about sexual sins, it still condemns cheating on your partner. Even with how confused the world is about killing with its embracing of abortion and euthanasia, it still condemns other forms of murder. Even with how confused the world is with what good government is, it still yearns for some kind of civil order. The world understands that you generally reap what you sow. It misunderstands and misidentifies this as karma, but it has the general idea right.

But this is not the righteousness that Jesus is talking about. This is not the righteousness that the Holy Spirit convicts the world with. It is a righteousness that comes from Jesus going to the Father.

What does Jesus mean?

Jesus says that “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven,” (Mt 5:20) and “you must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) As a Christian convicted by the Holy Spirit of your sin through the law, you know that you don’t possess the kind of righteousness Jesus demands. You know that even your good works are tainted with sin. In fact, when it comes to righteousness before God, you must despise even your good works.

If you are to have the righteousness that Jesus demands, it must come from another source. It must come from Jesus Himself. Jesus died for your sin and He lived for your righteousness. Jesus’ righteousness *did* exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. His righteousness *is* perfect as His Father is perfect. Jesus going to the Father shows you that His life of perfect righteousness and atoning sacrifice for your sins were accepted by your Father in heaven. He gives you His perfect righteousness as a gift in your Baptism through faith.

You have an alien righteousness. You have a righteousness that can’t be seen by the world. This righteousness that is yours in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit begins to produce righteousness in you. The Holy Spirit replaces your heart of stone with a heart of flesh. You begin to love God with your heart, soul and mind and you begin to love your neighbor as yourself. (Mt 22:37-39) The works done in faith are pleasing to your Father in heaven. Even though your works are tainted by your sin, they are counted as perfectly righteous by your Father in heaven when they are done in faith.

Do not be deceived. Works done outside of faith are damnable works, no matter how outwardly righteous they may appear to the world. You have an alien righteousness. Cling to Jesus and His righteousness.

Do not be deceived. If you persist in pernicious sin, you will lose your salvation. “If [you] say [you] have fellowship with [God] while [you] walk in darkness, [you] lie and do not practice the truth,” that is, “if [you] say you have no sin, [you] deceive [yourselves] and the truth is not in [you.]” (1 Jn 1:6, 8) And don’t confuse this with willful sin. Most of your sin is willful. You know you shouldn’t sin, but you do it anyway. You want what you want. Even though most of your sin is willful, it’s impossible to know all your sin. The Psalmist points out, “who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults.” (Ps 19:12) Cling to Jesus. “If [you] confess [your] sins, [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive [you your] sins to cleanse [you] from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn 1:9) Thanks be to God forgiveness depends on the faithfulness of Jesus! It is sure and certain!

Again, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the righteousness found only in Jesus through the proclamation of the church. May we continue to faithfully proclaim the apostolic Word which delivers Jesus to us!

*He will convict the world concerning judgment... because the ruler of this world is judged.*

First, the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning their unbelief in Christ.  
Second, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of the righteousness of Christ.  
Third, He will convict the world concerning judgment.

The world judges Christians as weak, ineffective, and pitiable. That judgment is of no concern for you. You have been judged already by God. God judges you as righteous in your baptism. God the Father covers you with the righteousness of His Son and calls you His dear son or daughter. You will receive the inheritance that Jesus won for you on the cross. He will say to you on that day, “well done, good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of your Master.” (Mt 25:21, 23) You have nothing to fear from the return of Christ. You pray along with John, “come, Lord Jesus!” (Rev 22:20)

You also have nothing to fear from Satan who is the ruler of this world for a time. He has been judged already. The eternal fire was created for “the devil and his angels.” (Mt 25:41) It was not created for you. The devil may torment you like he did Job, but nothing can separate you from the love of Jesus, “neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, not height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation!” (Rom 8:38-39) Thanks be to God for His steadfast love!

And again, the Holy Spirit works through the proclamation of His church.

*He will glorify Me, for He will take what is Mine and declare it to you.*

First, the Holy Spirit will convict the world concerning their unbelief in Christ. Second, the Holy Spirit will convict the world of the righteousness of Christ. Third, He will convict the world that the devil is condemned already. Fourth, He will cause the Word of Christ to be declared.

The Holy Spirit brought to remembrance all the things that Jesus did and said so that the Apostles could write it down for the world’s benefit. This is why we call it the Apostolic Faith handed down from generation to generation. This is the Word which the Holy Spirit works through. Jesus says that He will not speak on His own authority but only speak the Words of Jesus. (Jn 16:13) Jesus spoke the Words of our Father and the Holy Spirit speaks the Words of Jesus. There’s only one Word. The Old Testament is the Word of Jesus. The New Testament is the Word of Jesus. That’s why we care so much about the Scriptures.

Paul lets us know in Romans that you have faith through this very Word. (Rom 10:17) Paul reminds Timothy that the Scriptures make you wise unto salvation. (2 Tim 3:15) You do not have the Lord’s Supper for a time. But you have the Word proclaimed to you. This Word makes you wise unto salvation. The Holy Spirit uses these very words to create a living faith in you that gives you hope in the life to come. And that hope will not fail, for that hope is in Jesus Himself!

The Holy Spirit preserves the very Word that the church proclaims to the world.  
Thanks be to God for His saving Word!

Conclusion: The first article of the Creed confesses the work of God the Father in creation. The second article of the Creed confesses the work of Christ in redemption. The third article of the Creed confesses the work of the Holy Spirit:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*What does this mean?* “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.” (SC)

The Holy Spirit does all His work through the Word of Christ. *Cantate* means to sing. We “sing to the LORD a new song, for He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.” (Ps 98:1a, 2b) That righteousness is Christ whom the Holy Spirit delivers to you through the Word. Cling to that Word of Christ!

In Jesus’ name. Amen.