

Sermon *Paraclete*  
The Very Rev. David J. Marshall, All Angels by the Sea, 5.25.25

Jesus said to his disciples at the Last Supper:

*The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.*

Translated as “advocate” to describe the Holy Spirit, the Greek word John used is *paracletos* (which I will refer to as the *paraclete*). That word has both a legal sense and a relationship sense. Advocate is the legal sense. For most of Christianity, we believed the Greek NT was written in a legal sense or in the formal Greek. As such, it was believed that the Holy Spirit – *paraclete* – is our legal advocate before God. But, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has taught us that the Greek is the informal, street, or relationship sense style of the language. *Paraclete*, in a relationship sense, is one-who-comforts and defends.

I’d like to look at the first part of the word – *para* – because it gives deeper meaning to our relationship with the Holy Spirit. We do not have a fitting translation in English, so, imagine this: draw a large circle and then write “you” in the center. *Para* is the circle and “you” of course is you. The *paraclete* – Holy Spirit – is *para* to you; it encircles you. If you go to the right, it goes with you like the circle surrounding you. If you go left, it goes left, up down, backwards, forward, the Holy Spirit is always with you because it is the *PARA*-clete (always with you defender and comforter).

Jesus said he will give and leave his peace with us. Imagine another circle and then write the word “peace” in it. You are the circle, the peace is inside of you. But, unlike the *para* circle that goes around you, peace, as Jesus gives, goes out from you, out of your circle, and into the world.

The good news is that the Holy Spirit is always with you, and the *paraclete*/Holy Spirit defends and comforts you. Jesus gives us peace which is inside of you, and it flows from you to others.