

“Comfort Me”

I love getting mail. It has been that way since I was a little kid. It does not matter what sort of mail it is, as long as there is something in the mailbox. Of course, personal mail is the best, but circulars and pleas from charities will do. Indeed, nowadays it is a rarity to get a piece of mail that is not addressed to Eugene LeCouteur or “current resident.” Corresponding by personal letter has gone the way of the party line, cassette tapes, and penny candy. Now that we have email, Facebook, texting, and Twitter, it seems like there is almost no reason to hand write a letter, note, or postcard. It is laborious, requires stationery and postage, and our message can take days to reach its recipient, whereas electronic messages arrive in moments.

In spite of the many advantages of electronic communication there is still something exhilarating and comforting about receiving a real letter. For me letters are associated with days at camp or college anticipating a letter from home telling me how everyone is doing, what illnesses had been managed, what were the triumphs in school or sports for my little brother and sister, and learning how my grandparents were doing.

Letters, notes, and postcards provide comfort and connection that we have not figured out how to convey in electronic media. Comfort is one reason I have recently decided to put pen to paper and give the post office a little more business. I think most people appreciate receiving personal mail. It shows that someone cares enough about them to take the time to handwrite a note, put it in an envelope, put a stamp on it and take it to the post office to mail.

Comforter is one of the aspects of the word Παράκλητος; the one being sent to the disciples after Jesus’ ascension. Παράκλητος can also mean advocate, healer, and companion. I think that most people would welcome someone or something that offers those qualities. Those qualities are what we look for in friends and spouses.

We know that there are others who walk with us on our journey—friends, family, fellow believers, and the cloud of witnesses that spans all times and places. We also want the comforting and companionship of the Holy Spirit that Jesus promised to the disciples and to you and me. We can take comfort that when the letters don’t come, the inbox is empty, and the voicemail is not blinking with messages from those near and far, that the Holy Spirit is present to comfort, console, and guide us.

As I noted earlier, it is not just comfort that the Παράκλητος can provide. It can be an advocate much like a mentor or a lawyer would advocate for us. It argues on our behalf. It encourages us in our trials and tribulations. It is a supporter and backer of our cause and our inner spirit. The Holy Spirit believes in us as much as any relative, partner, or friend. The Holy Spirit never wavers in its support and belief in us.

The Paraclete is also a healer. Like one who comforts us in our failures it can also help heal the wounds of life. It helps heal our wounds from within; as it opens new pathways for our energies, gifts and dreams. The Paraclete is like a spiritual antibiotic. It is also like those homeopathic medicines that work in unknown ways. It may not be FDA approved, but the healing power of Holy Spirit for broken hearts is greater than anything from the pharmacy.

As important as all of these aspects of the Holy Spirit are perhaps companion is the most important. Jesus promises the Holy Spirit will be the one that never abandons us. The Paraclete is there to remind us of Jesus' teachings. It walks with us and helps us find the words we need to testify to our faith in the love of Jesus. When we feel alone, lonely, and adrift we are comforted knowing that the Holy Spirit is our constant companion.

The following poem by Jane Kenyon called "Let Evening Come"¹ is a quiet testament to the comfort and companionship of the Holy Spirit.

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

Even in the most lonesome moments in the dead of night, or when we feel lonely in a crowd. We are not without comfort, companionship, consolation and hope. The Holy Spirit is with us. No matter the circumstances of you daily life. No matter the pain, confusion, and anxiety you feel. God's comfort and mercy are with us all the days of our life. "God does not leave us / comfortless, so let evening come."

¹ Jane Kenyon, *Let Evening Come: Poems* (Minneapolis: Graywolf Press, 1990).