

## HOMILY

### *The Sixth Sunday of Easter*

*April 27, 2008*

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**Davison, Michigan**

Have you been living as a spiritual orphan? Have you been living as if you do not have a heavenly father who cares about you? Have you been wandering, lost in the world, embarrassed to admit your need of a savior?

Let me suggest some ways people live as spiritual orphans. We are living as spiritual orphans if we are living as if we are not accountable for how we spend our life. Jesus says in today's gospel,

*“Whoever has my commandments and observes them  
is the one who loves me.”*

Obedience is something we don't talk much about in the modern world. Everyone nowadays wants to do their own thing. But Jesus is quite clear—if you know yourself to be a child of God, then you will live like a child of God.

Have you noticed how some people will do anything to keep from being accountable for their actions? I read recently that March 13<sup>th</sup> of this year was designated as “National Blame It on Somebody Else Day!” Some people are like that. It's always somebody else's fault. But we are accountable. We are part of a family—the human family—God's family. Being a part of a family, we have responsibilities. We are to take care of our home, the earth. We are to take care of these precious bodies that God has given us. We are to take care of one another. And we are responsible for those weaker brothers and sisters who are not able to look out for themselves. We are living as spiritual orphans if we are living as if we are not accountable.

We are spiritual orphans if we are living as if we are the only ones on earth who matter. There's a story about a young man from Scotland who was admitted to Oxford University. He moved into a dormitory, but his mother worried about how

he'd get along with those Brits in a strange land. She gave him a call. "How do you find the English students, Donald?" Mother asked. "Oh, mother," he said, "they are strange and noisy people. The one on this side bangs his head against the wall all night and won't stop. The one on that side screams and curses until the sun comes up at dawn." "Oh, Donald, how do you put up with such rude, noisy people?" "I ignore them, mother," said Donald. "I just sit here quietly each night, playing my bagpipes!"

Well, no wonder Donald's neighbors were so disagreeable. Bagpipes playing in the middle of the night have a way of making you that way. But that's the way some people are. They live as if they were the only ones that matter. We encounter them on the roads and in our office. In fact, maybe we are the ones who are oblivious to our effect on others. We have responsibilities to and for one another.

Perhaps you heard about the man in New York who was standing with his children waiting for a subway train when a young man nearby had a seizure and fell down into the path of the oncoming train? Seeing this young man's predicament, this total stranger responded by jumping down onto the tracks. He pulled the young man who was having the seizure to the center of the tracks and put his body on top of the young man as the train passed over the two of them. The train came so close it brushed grease on the back of the stranger's sweatshirt. But both men were miraculously spared.

Thank God there still are people like that—people who will risk their lives for a stranger. They remind us that we are not orphans. We belong to a family. We are accountable. We have responsibilities for one another.

But there is another way we may live as a spiritual orphan. We are living as spiritual orphans if we think we are alone in this world. We are not alone. If we love Jesus, he is with us.

Some of us can identify with the stranger jumping onto the tracks to save a young man having a seizure. But others of us may identify with the young man who fell. We feel as if we are the ones who are falling and we need someone to save us. We have someone who will save us. Jesus says in our lesson for today,

*“I will ask the Father and he will give you  
another advocate to be with you always,  
the Spirit of Truth.”*

In some places, this spirit is called a comforter. The point is, we are never alone. The good news is that we are never without help. When we are in times of distress, that is our hope...we are not orphans. We are not alone in this world. We have a Savior, a Redeemer. Someone who watches over us and cares for us. Someone who will counsel us and comfort us.

So can the good news get any better? Jesus has sent his Holy Spirit as a counselor, as a comforter, to give us strength, to give us power for the living of these days.