

St. Andrew's Episcopal Church  
6 Easter Year C  
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The Rev. Grayce O'Neill Rowe

I simply must tell you how happy I am that we don't have one of those signs out front; you know, the kind of sign that often tells the title of Sunday's sermon. I'm really glad that we don't have one of those signs every week and especially so today for you see if I had to give a title to this sermon, and then if the title was on the sign out front, well, I'm afraid that people who don't know much about the Episcopal church, I'm afraid that people would think that we are even stranger than they may already think that we are. For you see, if I had to give this sermon a title, the title would be "The Holy Spirit is a nag!"

Now I come by using this title very lovingly and that is because my children would probably tell you that as they were growing up I was the one who was a nag. Chrissy, remember to do this. Liam, remember to do that. Shayne, well, you get the picture. My constant reminding won me the title of nag. And I don't think that's so bad. Now, I don't like to be called a nag, but I do think that my constant urging and reminding was not such a bad thing. I mean, how would they get by if I didn't nag them? Well, maybe we really don't need to go there!

The intention behind my nagging, though, was to remind them of things that they already knew. They knew that I didn't like to see their snack dishes left in the Living Room. They knew that they needed to say please and thank you. It's just that they would forget and so Mama, the nag, would remind them.

Jesus tells us today in the Gospel that we just heard that the Holy Spirit is a nag. Now, he doesn't exactly call the Holy Spirit a nag but he did say that "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, . . . will remind you of all that I have said to you." The Holy Spirit will remind you, the Holy Spirit will be a nag reminding you of what Jesus has already said to you, reminding you of what Jesus has already taught you, reminding you of what you already know.

And, no, I don't expect that the Holy Spirit will care too much about dishes left in the Living Room. The Holy Spirit is going to nag us about things that are considerably more important than that.

The Holy Spirit will nag us about the most important thing that Jesus taught us and as you get to know me and you hear what I preach about most of the time, you will not be surprised to hear me say that the Holy Spirit will nag us about how and how well we love. For that is what Jesus taught his disciples. That is what Jesus continues to teach us, Jesus teaches us to love. And it may be that we learn that eagerly and well. I expect that we can all repeat Jesus' teaching, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

The only problem is that sometimes we forget, or sometimes we are not paying attention, or sometimes we really would prefer not to be bothered. And sometimes loving is just too difficult or sometimes we want to put limits on the love that Jesus has taught us to love.

Leo Buscaglia, fondly known as Dr. Love, author, motivational speaker, professor at the University of Southern California until he died in 1998, taught a course entitled, "Love 1A," a course that he offered for free, a course that he started to teach after one of his students died by suicide. Buscaglia taught this course because he believed that we need to be reminded over and over again about love because, and I quote, "we take it for granted. We assume we are all perfect lovers and all we need do is wait and our love will grow and blossom as readily as a flower in spring." (Internet)

Obviously, Buscaglia knew what he was talking about. We are not perfect lovers and that is why Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to nag us into loving the way that Jesus taught us to love. And how are we supposed to love? Here are some suggestions:

The love that Jesus has taught us is a love that will not rest until every child has enough food to eat. The love that Jesus has taught us is a love that will not rest until there is an end to violence and hatred. It is a love that will not be satisfied until there is justice for all – until there is fair and equal treatment, fair and equal opportunities for all people.

It is a love that is willing to forgive, a love that will enable us to sacrifice for the welfare of another. A love that we offer without thought of what we get in return.

The love that Jesus has taught us is one that will turn this world upside down and if there ever was a time that our world needed this kind of love, I would say that we are living in that time right now. We all know that love and yet we all, myself included, we all forget it from time to time.

And so we need the Holy Spirit, the nag, to come along and remind us and correct us and urge us on.

The next time that you listen to the news or read the newspaper, listen as well for the nagging of the Holy Spirit.

The next time that you are asked to donate money or food or even your time and talents listen for the nagging of the Holy Spirit.

The next time that you are angry and unwilling to forgive, listen for the nagging of the Holy Spirit.

The nagging may come from within. The nagging may come in the form of another person speaking to you.

One thing for sure, just like my nagging of my children, I didn't stop until they started to remember on their own, the Holy Spirit will not stop nagging us until we start to remember, the Holy Spirit will not stop nagging us until we love the way that Jesus has taught us to love.