



I do not know how people without faith make it. Without our faith, we are adrift, aimless, purposeless, directionless. Without our faith, without the promise of the Holy Spirit, we are truly orphans. And just like an orphan plagued society, when we feel abandoned, all sort of bad, ugly things begin to happen. We become selfish. We become obsessive. We become paranoid. We become depressed.

So how do we encounter this Spirit, how do we feel the comfort of God, how do we know we are not orphans?

First, we have our community, the Church. Has the Church in the past been neglectful and even careless of the most vulnerable and exposed of its members? Undoubtedly. But here is what you will not hear from Hollywood or the evening news: for every horror story, for every incidence of shameful abuse, there are thousands, even hundreds of thousands of other stories of hope, of love, of goodness, of support. When my brother died in October, it was the church, this community, the Borgia community, my family, Tom's faith community, my brother priests, and untold others, who were the instruments of the Holy Spirit bringing comfort, bringing encouragement, gladdening my heart and the hearts of my family. At times, folks focus on the bad things so much that they miss the overpowering goodness that is all around us.

Second, our God is a God of hope. The bottom line of our story of faith, what we have been celebrating for the past six weeks or so, is the mind-boggling expectation of the Resurrection. When we walk in this hope, when we walk in this holy anticipation, it changes us, dispels our fear, gives us the courage to walk forward. I discover this hope primarily in my prayer which reminds me, day in and day out, that death and sadness and darkness do not have the final say.

Finally, we discover the comfort of the Spirit in unlikely and surprising ways. At the end of every school year, one of our teachers makes our graduating Seniors write letters to the faculty. I am always shocked by who writes to me. Often it is a student that I barely ever talked to throughout their four years at Borgia. And yet, they will talk about how one little thing I said or did made an enormous impact on their lives. I am continually amazed how something, often an off handed comment could mean the world to someone, bringing them comfort, bringing them joy.

All those orphans I mentioned at the beginning of my homily had someone in their lives who made that kind of an impact. For Babe Ruth it was a religious brother, for Frances McDormand it was a minister and his wife who adopted her, for Louis Armstrong it was a Lithuanian-Jewish family, the Karnofsky's who took him in. (You didn't see that one coming.)

Who are the orphans in your sphere of influence? Who are those people who need a good word of comfort? To whom will you give the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter?