

**Lawyers in American society get stereotyped as greedy and deceptive. They are often the punch line of jokes and an object of ridicule. But lawyers perform important tasks. They free the innocent, they defend victims, they keep criminals off our streets, and they remind us all to observe the law for the common good. There are bad lawyers just as there are bad priests and bad parents, but the good ones make a case for us in ways that we cannot do on our own.**

**Jesus called the Holy Spirit a lawyer. Our translation of today's gospel uses the word "advocate". You may also see the word "counselor" or "comforter". We sometimes hear the word "Paraclete", which resembles the original Greek word in the gospel, *parakletos*, but we otherwise don't use that word in English. If you said you were going to look for a Paraclete, most people would advise you to get a bird cage first. So our translation calls the Holy Spirit an advocate, but it probably means a lawyer.**

**By choosing this image, Jesus paints a picture of a world at odds. He views reality as a courtroom where his followers are going to be put on trial. Unbelievers will oppose his followers and try to stop his word from spreading. But Jesus trusts this arraignment because the lawyer for the Christians is the Holy Spirit. This Advocate will stay with them and help them through every trial.**

**Our Christian beliefs are put on trial in politics, the media, and our everyday lives. Our positions on abortion and stem cell research have been on trial in our nation and state. At school, students who say no to drugs, premarital sex and violence suffer from other students who bully, belittle, or shun them. Some videogames, movies and internet sites promote a lifestyle that we oppose. Within our families, some parents and teens are at odds over what they believe; some in-laws struggle to blend their customs and values. Sometimes you want to speak up to stop a crime or to silence prejudice, but you cannot find the words, you cannot argue well, and you feel put on the spot by those who are more forceful or just plain louder than you are. At those times, it'd be nice to have a kind of spiritual lawyer, an advocate, someone who would plead your cause.**

**This is who Jesus sent us. This is the Holy Spirit. We received that Spirit in our confirmation; we celebrate the coming of that Spirit each year on Pentecost. We consult that Spirit anytime we pray, and especially when we think over what is the right thing to say or do, what our choices are, and the consequences those choices bring. As with any relationship we need to take time for it. When something really important is going on, the Holy Spirit is anxious to intervene. When we open our minds and hearts and give God some time, we will get the advice we seek.**

**Jesus promised, "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you always." Our counselor, our comforter, our helper, our guide, our Paraclete, our lawyer is the Holy Spirit, and that Spirit is ready to help in any trial.**