

FIFTH SUNDAY OF
Easter

MAY 2, 2021



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I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in them will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.

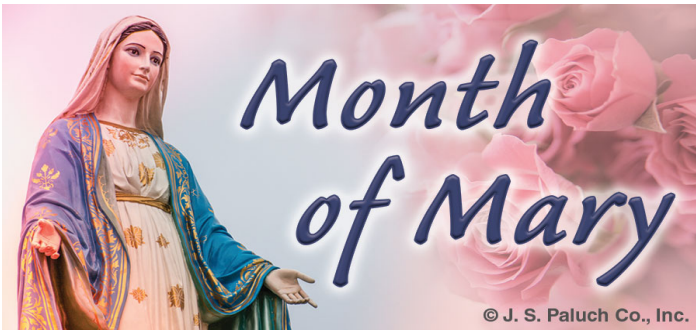
John 15:5

Feast of Faith

The Homily

The ambo, or pulpit, is a special place—it is the place for God’s word. That is why it is not used for all the spoken words of the Mass, even important words like the collects and the blessing. The ambo is only used for the scripture readings, and for the homily and the prayer of the faithful. The homily is part of the Liturgy of the Word. It flows from the readings we have just heard, and helps us to understand the way in which God is speaking to us today. The homily is not a lecture, a catechism lesson, or a speech. It is more like an exhortation; it has an urgency about it, for it calls us to find ourselves in the scripture, to live the faith we profess, to see our world by the light of the Gospel. The homily, in itself a response to God’s word, demands a response from us. There are many styles of preaching and many ways to respond to the scriptures. But whether the homily is weak or strong, an open ear and an open heart can find in it an abundance of spiritual nourishment.

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



Bearing Fruit

Few of us, even when we meditate on the image of the vine and branches, stop to really think about how God “prunes” us. For some there is the danger of thinking that we are already producing fruit for the kingdom, in deed and truth as John says, perhaps raising a family, being active in our parish, and so on. But even those branches which are bearing fruit, the Gospel tells us, can be pruned to produce still more. Today Saul, freshly “pruned” by his conversion, arrives in Jerusalem and meets resistance. Since he had been persecuting Christians, this was only natural. But even after he is accepted and begins to bear fruit, he meets further adversity, and his letters are filled with many accounts of how his trials “pruned” him to produce greater fruit for the kingdom. Like him, as long as we remain in Christ we will continue to bear fruit and, when the will of the Father determines it is time to prune us, the strength of the true vine must enable us to endure it.

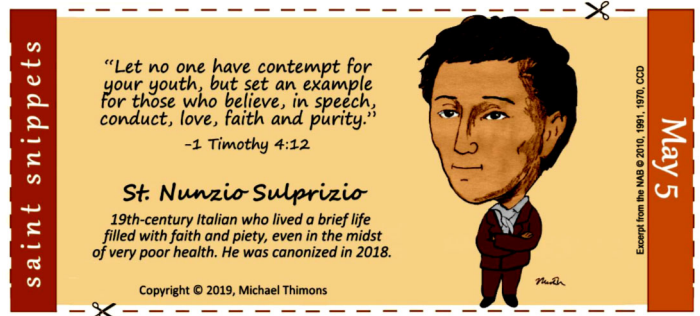
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Readings for the Week

Monday:	1 Cor 15:1-8; Ps 19:2-5; Jn 14:6-14
Tuesday:	Acts 14:19-28; Ps 145:10-13ab, 21; Jn 14:27-31a
Wednesday:	Acts 15:1-6; Ps 122:1-5; Jn 15:1-8
Thursday:	Acts 15:7-21; Ps 96:1-3, 10; Jn 15:9-11
Friday:	Acts 15:22-31; Ps 57:8-10, 12; Jn 15:12-17
Saturday:	Acts 16:1-10; Ps 100:1b-3, 5; Jn 15:18-21
Sunday:	Acts 10:25-36, 34-35, 44-48; Ps 98:1-4; 1 Jn 4:7-10 or 1 Jn 4:11-16; Jn 15:9-17 or Jn 17:11b-19

Saints and Special Observances

Sunday:	Fifth Sunday of Easter
Monday:	Ss. Philip and James
Wednesday:	Cinco de Mayo
Thursday:	National Day of Prayer
Friday:	First Friday



Holiest Flower

Mary is the lily in God’s garden.

—St. Bridget of Sweden

Today’s Readings

First Reading — Barnabas reported to the apostles how Saul had seen the Lord on the way (Acts 9:26-31).

Psalm — I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people (Psalm 22).

Second Reading — This is God’s commandment: that we may believe and love (1 John 3:18-24).

Gospel — I am the true vine; whoever remains in me will bear much fruit (John 15:1-8).

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Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2021

Let us love not in word or speech
But in deed and truth

—1 John 3:18

Treasures From Our Tradition

The season of First Communions is here, and invitations pour in as the new communicants, mostly seven years old, gather extended families for their first reception of the Eucharist. Recently, the celebrations are often on Sundays, in the regular gatherings of the faith community. There, it becomes clear that First Communion is meant to initiate a regular pattern of reception, and that there is to be a second, third, hundredth, thousandth celebration.

Eastern Catholics and Orthodox children follow a different plan, since they are given a taste of the consecrated wine at their baptism as infants. We Western Christians delay until “the age of reason,” but many years ago, Communion was not for children at all. Twelve to fourteen was the typical time for Roman Catholics to receive for the first time, and in those days this was a transition into the adult world of work and marriage. The custom did not begin to shift to childhood until reforms set in place by Pope St. Pius X began to take hold in the 1920s. If you are going to a First Communion, you can give thanks that the table of the Lord is today open so much more lavishly than before.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Pride

What better proof of your pride could you have given than to claim you were not proud?

—St. John Climacus

Christianity

Christianity is the spirit of Jesus Christ at work in the world.

—Anonymous

Living in Shame?

In the reading from St. John's first letter, he talks about our hearts condemning us. (1 John 3:20) He is referring to the shame we feel when we do something sinful. When he says God is greater than our hearts he means that even when we know we have sinned, even if we feel unworthy to be forgiven, God is still a forgiving God, who doesn't wait for us to be "worthy." He patiently waits for us to ask for his mercy, to want his forgiveness. So when we confess our sins, we need not doubt that we are forgiven.

But sometimes we feel shame when we have done nothing wrong. It may be something simple, like sneezing in the quiet part of a symphony. Or perhaps something more serious, such as when you accidentally hurt someone. That is when it is good to remember that God knows what happened and still loves us.

The best way to remember this is by living as God commands, by loving God and our neighbor. If you believe in Jesus, you love God, because you trust that God sent his Son to save us. So we know that God forgives us even before we ask him to. If you love your neighbor, then you reach out to the person you hurt, instead of hiding in shame, and try to help them.

When we stop living in shame and start living in love, we know that the Lord lives in us. And as both the second reading and the gospel point out, we can ask for whatever we need and receive it. For when God lives in us and we live in him, we won't ask for anything trivial or selfish. His Spirit teaches us how to pray with confidence and faith. We pray as Jesus taught in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy will be done." Our love and trust in God will help us to accept whatever God sends our way.

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FIFTH SUNDAY OF Easter

MAY 2, 2021

I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in them will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.

John 15:5

THE FRUIT OF FAITH

In today's Gospel, Jesus likens our relationship with him to a plant with many branches. We, the branches, are called to remain so close to Jesus that we bear fruit, loving one another as Christ loves us. Saul bore the fruit of his faith through powerful witness that drew others to Christ. And the branches that grew into the early Church were extraordinarily fruitful. What is the fruit of your faith in Jesus Christ?

VINES, BRANCHES, AND FRUIT

Few activities are as disappointing as cultivating garden plants, watering them, and ensuring that they receive sunlight and nutrients, only to receive one or two vegetables or flowers to show for all the effort. Jesus uses the metaphor of the vine and branches to describe how closely we are called to remain with him—so close that we bear the fruit of his life and love in the way we live. When we do this, Jesus says, we give glory to God the Father, which Jesus did perfectly through his life, passion, death, and resurrection. Like plants that rely on the sun and nutrients from the soil, we rely on the Lord Jesus through whom we can do all for which we are called. Without the Lord, we can do nothing.

LEARN FROM THE FIRST ONES

The story of the early Church that we hear from the Acts of the Apostles during the Easter season is instructive and inspiring. We learn how the community grew in their understanding of what it means to remain close to Jesus in the most challenging of situations. They lived in word and deed as Christ had taught and bore the fruit of their faith in their daily decisions, in small ways and in dramatic moments. Faced with Saul who had persecuted Christians and who presented himself as a disciple, Barnabas risked believing Saul's testimony. Through Barnabas, the community accepted Saul, with increasing numbers of people being led to belief in Christ as a result. We too are called to live in word and deed, taking to heart Christ's command to love one another, even when it is challenging to do so. We may find inspiration in the way the early believers drew consolation from the Holy Spirit, finding wisdom and strength to keep the commandments and do what pleases God.

TODAY'S READINGS

Acts 9:26–31

Psalm 22:26–27, 28, 30, 31–32

1 John 3:18–24

John 15:1–8

Prayer of the Faithful

**As branches of the one true Vine, we call on the name of our God,
who never fails to answer our prayers.**

**For the mission work of the Church throughout the
world, and for the safety of all who proclaim the Good News,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**For peace in the world, for a safe return home for
refugees, and for cooperation and generous
sharing of resources among nations,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**For all those who feel they are being pruned by
the Master Vinegrower through illness or other
challenges in their lives,
let us pray to the Lord.**

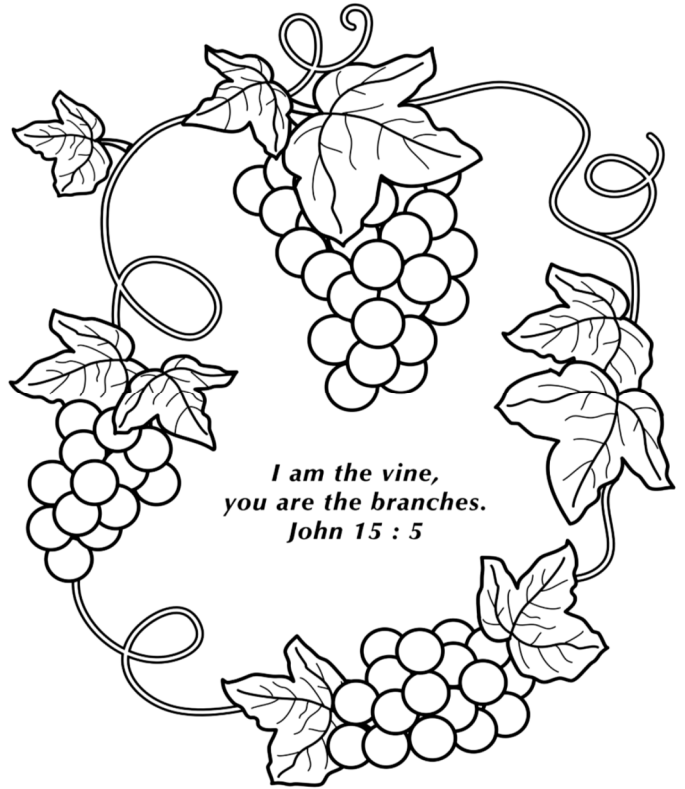
**For all those newly baptized this Easter season,
newly grafted to the Vine, as they thrive and
bear fruit through their vital witness to the Good News,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**For all who have no place to call home to,
for those who are unemployed or underemployed,
and for those who go to bed hungry or in pain every night,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19,
and for all who have died,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts;
for all our intentions spoken and unspoken,
let us pray to the Lord.**

**O God,
we have been grafted onto the vine of Christ by our Baptism.
Grant us the grace to grow ever closer to him
that we may bear fruit to the glory of your name.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord.**



God's Word for Children

God is like a mighty vine, and we are like the branches that can grow from it and produce fruit! This means that we can serve God in wonderful ways when we rely on God's help and strength. Look at the number on each leaf. Draw that amount of fruit onto that branch. Keep this as a chart, coloring in a piece of fruit each time you do something for the Lord!

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Fifth Sunday of Easter

A man named Saul changed his name to Paul when he became a follower of Jesus. Notice how the two names rhyme. To finish this story about Paul, choose three sets of rhyming words to put in the blanks.

The followers of Jesus, Saul used to _____.	told bold
But Jesus appeared and set him _____.	love above
In Jerusalem it was Jesus' message Paul _____.	there everywhere
The way he spoke was very _____.	hate straight
Some wanted to kill Paul, so he left _____ ...	late gate
To build up the church of God _____!	

Fifth Sunday of Easter May 2, 2021

Let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.

— 1 John 3:18



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