

[47]

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

B

FIRST READING

Barnabas explained to the apostles how the Lord appeared to Saul
and spoke to him on his journey.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

9:26-28

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem,
he tried to join the followers.
But they were all afraid of him,
because they did not believe he was a true follower.

Then Barnabas helped him by taking him to the apostles.
He explained how on the road to Damascus,
Saul had seen the Lord and how the Lord had spoken to Saul.
Barnabas also said that when Saul was in Damascus,
he had spoken bravely in the name of Jesus.

Saul moved about freely with the followers in Jerusalem
and told everyone about the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

22:27, 30-31

R. (26a) I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.
or:
R. Alleluia.

Everyone on this earth
will remember you, Lord.
People all over the world
will turn and worship you.

R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.
or:
R. Alleluia.

In the future, everyone will worship and learn
about you, our Lord.
People not yet born
will be told,
“The Lord has saved us!”

*R. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.
or:
R. Alleluia.*

SECOND READING

God's commandment is this: love others by helping them.

A reading from the first letter of John

3:18

Children, you show love for others by truly helping them,
and not merely by talking about it.

The word of the Lord.

ALLELUIA

John 15:4a, 5b

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord;
my branches bear much fruit.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

GOSPEL

All who live in me, and I in them, bear much fruit.

† A reading from the holy gospel according to John

15:1-5, 7-8

Jesus said to his disciples:

“I am the true vine,
and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts away every branch of mine that does not produce fruit.

But he trims clean every branch that does produce fruit,
so that it will produce even more fruit.

“You are already clean because of what I have said to you.

“Stay joined to me,
and I will stay joined to you.
Just as a branch cannot produce fruit

unless it stays joined to the vine,
you cannot produce fruit unless you stay joined to me.

“I am the vine, and you are the branches.
If you stay joined to me, and I stay joined to you,
then you will produce lots of fruit.
But you cannot do anything without me.

“Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you.
Then you can pray for whatever you want,
and your prayer will be answered.

“When you become fruitful disciples of mine,
my Father will be honored.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Fifth Sunday of Easter—B Cycle

Prayer:

Dear God, Help me to be good. Thank you for always loving me! Help me to know how to grow to be a good Jesus person. Thank you, Jesus. Amen

Acts 9:26-31

Psalm 22: 26-27, 28, 30, 31-32

1 John 3:18-24

John 15:1-8

REFLECTION: Being Connected to Jesus like the branches are connected to the vine

Have you ever stopped and examined a tree very closely. It has a trunk, lots of branches that lead out from the trunk and are supported and nourished by the trunk. If the branches are nourished well, you will see buds that break open into new growth called leaves. Later, even there will appear blossom or flowers. On some trees even fruit often appear, like apples or plums or oranges or nuts.

A good gardener needs to cut off old branches, trim the dead parts or the old parts that aren't giving life in order for more fruit and life to grow and flourish. The fruit that falls to the ground dies because it has no connection anymore to the life giving water and nutrients that the trunk brings.

If you have ever had a chance to see a real grapevine or vineyard, you will notice it is very much like a tree. It has vines instead of a trunk and branches that carry life to the fruit called grapes.

I imagine grape vineyards grew plentiful in the hills where Jesus walked and lived. Because, in today's Gospel reading, Jesus picks something very familiar to all, like a vine on a tree or in a vineyard and uses it to let us know about our relationship to Him—how closely we are connected to Him. Jesus says: "Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own and needs to stay connected to the tree, so it is the same with Jesus and us." When we remain connected to Jesus by prayer and the Eucharist, and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and by loving others by treating others with care and respect in things we say and do, Jesus fills us with his life and nourishes us with His life-giving food. Then we will bear the fruit of Jesus. We will bring joy and happiness and peace to ourselves and others. We will be life-giving to others like Jesus is life-giving to us.

Jesus even goes on to say in today's Gospel that when we stay close to Him, we can ask for whatever we want and Jesus will grant to us what Jesus knows we need. That the trust that we show to Jesus by asking Him for things and believing that Jesus will give us all we need makes for a special relationship between Jesus and us, like the relationship between the vine and the branches, like Jesus and his disciples. We will feel that special closeness; we will feel Jesus' Life in our hearts. We will become as delightful as any grape or apple or fruit.

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If we look at the New Testament reading from the Acts of the Apostle, the first reading today, we see and hear about Saul. Saul had been going about killing people who followed and lived like Jesus. Then one day Saul saw the Lord himself and this changed his way. His bad actions were pruned or cut away and he remained close to Jesus and good things, good fruit began to appear. He spoke out and brought good news to Churches all over the land. Saul became Jesus' special disciple and told many people about Jesus bringing them new life. Saul was connected to Jesus like the branches are connected to the vine, like Jesus wants to be connected to us.

Jesus asks us to prune away any bad behavior, any bad ways and turn closer to Jesus and be connected to Him like the branches are to the vines, so we can be nourished by His life. Only then can we be Jesus helper in bringing new life to others.

QUESTIONS

How do we know if we are being fed by God's love?

What do we look like when we are being fed by God's love?

How do we shut out God's love? What things about me need to be pruned?

What can we do to show God's love to others?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Cut out green leaves and keep them in a special bowl in the middle of the kitchen table. Draw a wiggly line on a colored piece of paper and put it on the refrigerator. When you "catch" somebody showing God's love to you, put their name on a leaf and paste it on the wiggly line "vine". At the end of the week, see if your family vine is a strong vine, or a weak vine.

Try this for several weeks to see if you can get better at seeing God's love at work in each other.

On _____ when you finish, celebrate what you have learned by planting a vine, flower, tree in the family yard. When you see what you have planted, it is to remind you that we are all asked to show God's love to each other every day, and when we do, our vine will be a strong vine.