

## **Fifth Sunday of Easter (5/10/09)**

The parable of the vine and branches is incredibly powerful and moving. Jesus is the vine that carries God's life-force through us, the branches, to bring new life. As long as we remained attached to the vine we have the life of the Spirit flowing through us. When we try to handle life our own way, detaching ourselves from the vine, we lose the life from Christ. We remain attached to the vine when we receive the Word and meditate on it in our lives, and when we participate in the sacramental life of the Church. Jesus left us the sacraments as the visible sign of His Life within us.

The sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation are the everyday encounter with Jesus Himself. Every time we receive the Eucharist let us think about the spiritual life of Jesus flowing through us just as the physical particles of the Eucharistic food flow through us. When we focus and meditate on this miracle the life-force of the Spirit comes fully alive in us. It is our conscious acceptance of God's grace. When we come to the Eucharistic banquet let us ask the Lord to help us become more aware of and receptive to the life-giving grace He wishes to share with us. Then we become Life to the world. What a Miracle!

## **Sixth Sunday of Easter (5/17/09)**

One of the more beautiful and profound verses of scripture occurs in today's gospel. Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper, "If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love...I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy might be complete." John 15:10. Jesus wishes for all of us to have complete joy! What a concept! Religion is not meant to be dry and sad; Jesus wants us to experience the joy of God's love in our everyday lives, not just at the end of time. Of course, there are the tough times in life also. As last week's gospel reminds us, God will "prune" us through our everyday trials so we become more fruitful.

What's the secret of enjoying pruning? For the devoted disciple, pruning is the process of helping us grow more fruitful. If it is a little painful, all the more joy to feel as we allow ourselves to suffer for God's love. We don't look for suffering but when it comes the disciple embraces it to the cross knowing that God is at work in us to make us better lovers. When we think about it, there is true joy in knowing that our God cares for us and wants us to be the best we can be. May we embrace the Living Christ within us and share our love and joy with the world. Amen!

## **Ascension of the Lord (5/24/09)**

The Feast of the Ascension celebrates the end of the appearances of the risen Jesus and His return in glory to the Father. After His resurrection Jesus needed to spend more time with his disciples to prepare them for their ministry to the world. He also had to convince them of the reality of His resurrection so that they could be convincing witnesses to the world. After all, trying to convince someone that someone else (Jesus) had been raised from the dead was not an easy proposition. There had never been a resurrection in human history! After Jesus convinces His disciples of the reality of His resurrection (inviting them to touch Him, and eating with them), Jesus has completed His mission on earth.

Jesus returns to the Father so that He can send the Holy Spirit to be with his disciples. His commission to them was to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world. The Holy Spirit, which would be given to them at Pentecost, would enable them to testify to Jesus throughout the entire world. Jesus is ready to entrust the continuation of His work of redemption to the Church so that all people can know of God's love and offer of salvation. That is still the mission of the Church today, to the whole world, to each new generation of children by their parents. May Jesus in heaven bless us in His work. Amen!

## **Pentecost Sunday (5/31/09)**

Pentecost celebrates the beginning of the Church. On this day the apostles and disciples received the gift of the Holy Spirit from Jesus to enable them to proclaim to an often hostile or uncaring world the salvation offered through Jesus Christ. Through his death and resurrection Jesus provides the grace of salvation to all who repent and believe in the good news. On Pentecost, after Jesus has ascended to His Father, Jesus sends His Spirit to empower the disciples to continue His work of salvation. That is the same mission of the Church today, to proclaim the salvation from sin through belief in Jesus as God's reconciling messenger.

Most of us are not invited by God to travel to foreign lands and proclaim the gospel to people who have little knowledge of God, or to stand on street corners and preach and argue with people. All of us however are invited to preach the gospel in our lives, with our family and friends. Parents in particular are invited to preach the gospel every day in their homes to their children. Every new child is a candidate for hearing the message of salvation through the gospel. Parents have the special opportunity to help form their children in the knowledge of God's love. That is what Pentecost means to you and me. May God bless us in His work of salvation within our families. Amen!