

The Living Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B

28 April 2024

First Reading Acts 9:26-31

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

When Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to Saul and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. But after he had spoken to the Hellenists, and argued with them, they became determined to kill him. When the brothers knew, they took him to Caesarea, and sent him off from there to Tarsus.

The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 21:26-28. 30-32. R. v.26

(R.) I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

or:

(R.) Alleluia.

1. My vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor shall eat and shall have their fill.
They shall praise the Lord, those who seek him.
May their hearts live for ever and ever! (R.)
2. All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord,
all families of the nations worship before him.
They shall worship him, all the mighty of the earth;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust. (R.)
3. And my soul shall live for him, my children serve him.
They shall tell of the Lord to generations yet to come,
declare his faithfulness to peoples yet unborn:
'These things the Lord has done.' (R.)

Second Reading 1 Jn 3:18-24

His commandments are these: that we believe and that we love one another.

My children,
our love is not to be just words or mere talk,
but something real and active;
only by this can we be certain
that we are the children of the truth
and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence,
whatever accusations it may raise against us,
because God is greater than our conscience
and he knows everything.

My dear people,
if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience,
we need not be afraid in God's presence,
and whatever we ask him,
we shall receive,
because we keep his commandments
and live the kind of life that he wants.
His commandments are these:
that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ
and that we love one another
as he told us to.
Whoever keeps his commandments
lives in God and God lives in him.
We know that he lives in us
by the Spirit that he has given us.

Gospel Acclamation Jn 15:4-5

Alleluia, alleluia!

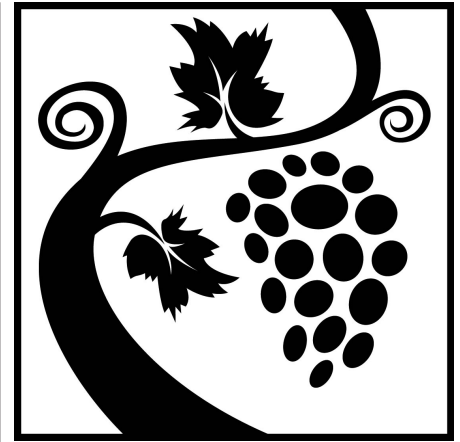
*Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord;
my branches bear much fruit.
Alleluia!*

Gospel Jn 15:1-8

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

Jesus said to his disciples:

'I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit
he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he
prunes
to make it bear even more.
You are pruned already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to
you.
Make your home in me, as I make mine in
you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
but must remain part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine,
you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
is like a branch that has been thrown away
- he withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on
the fire,
and they are burnt.
If you remain in me
and my words remain in you,
you may ask what you will
and you shall get it.
It is to the glory of my Father that you should
bear much fruit,
and then you will be my disciples.'



Reflection by Fr Michael Tate

We are too familiar with today's gospel. Christ is the vine and we are the branches, sometimes in need of a good pruning. But God's purpose is not to produce a perfect vineyard. It is to produce a full-bodied wine at the end of history.

There is a foretaste of this at every Mass. The wine we offer - 'fruit of the earth and work of human hands' - becomes the spiritual drink which best serves the purpose of our Heavenly Father. How does this happen?

For the Jewish people observing an animal whose throat is cut, it is obvious that the life drains out with the blood. 'Life' and 'blood' became synonyms. So, when the Jewish Jesus says of the wine in the chalice at the Last Supper: 'This is my blood', amongst other things he is saying: 'This is my life force, this is my very life given unreservedly for you.'

So, when we drink from the chalice at Holy Communion, the life of the Risen Lord courses through our bodies just as the sap of the vine courses through its branches. We share the same ultimate vitality so that our bodily existence builds into the Body of Christ. He becomes truly 'full-bodied' as the Divine Vigneron desires.

We could take a moment to pray that we respond to the pruning and the tending and the pressing by our Heavenly Father so as to contribute our distinctive character to the vintage at the end of history, the spiritual drink of the Kingdom of Heaven.

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Wordsearch

Try to find these words:

- | | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|
| clean | fruit | produce |
| cut | gardener | stay |
| disciples | mine | teach |
| Father | prayer | vine |

Z E G V P Q M P W A Z N L E W Y H
P M W M Q I K C T S D K D K X R L
L R K B N J P X F B F O O T C R H
E B A E C L Y B Q U N T Q T A N F
W L U Y X P P X Q H D T D X P J O
M T U U E I F T F D F S F R Z G Y
V J X U D R H E M U L I A H Z S H
Z Z X O D V G G C X T E T T P V A
D K X B D J I H P U C T H I O C T
H J F R J S U R J A D S E U Z E J
E X U R F L E Y A T S O R V A Z M
N B F Z U N E C L E A N R C C U W
I L M S E F R U I T K C H P U F R
V M Q D U O G U Z M V D B E T Q C
W Z R N M U V S C C D S V P F F X
K A C A U U J J A N T K Y S J T T
G I W L M B D I S C I P L E S H D

St Catherine of Siena was the youngest of 25 children born of a wealthy Italian family in c1347. From a young age she devoted her life to prayer and became a tertiary sister of the Dominican order despite her parents objections. She worked with the sick and attracted a following of men and women who accompanied her on her frequent journeys. Catherine became heavily involved in the politics of both Church and State as she attempted to make peace between Florence and the papacy. She urged Pope Gregory to return the papacy to Rome from Avignon, which he did in 1376. His death two years later led to a schism in the Western church, as detractors of the newly elected pope Urban VI set up a rival pope in Avignon. In an effort to restore unity to the church, Catherine gave support to the Urban VI but was exhausted by her efforts. She died soon after suffering a stroke, aged only 33.

Can you work out which of these three branches is the one bearing fruit?

