

ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

5th Sunday of Easter
Year B
May 2, 2021

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Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa
Pastor

Our Sunday Masses are now held inside the Church, on Saturdays at 4:30 PM and on Sundays at 8:30 AM.
Please come in a face mask and observe social distancing.

1st Reading: Acts 9:26-31

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him. And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus.

The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

The Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm:

**"I will praise you, Lord,
in the assembly
of your people."**

I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the Lord.

The lowly shall eat their fill; they who seek the Lord shall praise him: "May your hearts live forever!"

R.

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the families of the nations shall bow down before him.

R.

To him alone shall bow down all who sleep in the earth; before him shall bend all who go down into the dust.

R.

And to him my soul shall live; my descendants shall serve him. Let the coming generation be told of the Lord that they may proclaim to a people yet to be born the justice he has shown. **R.**

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:18-24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything. Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God and receive from him whatever we ask, because

we keep his commandments and do what pleases him. And his commandment is this: we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us. Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit he gave us.

The Word of the Lord.

LECTOR: Gospel

Acclamation:

ALL: Alleluia, Alleluia.

LECTOR: Remain in me as I remain in you, says the Lord. Whoever remains in me will bear much fruit.

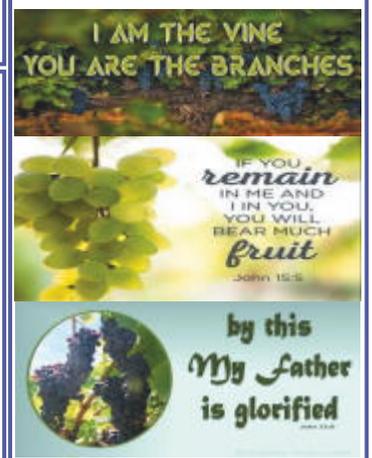
ALL: Alleluia, Alleluia.

Gospel Reading: John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a

branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

The Gospel of the Lord.



**The Mystery of Faith:
We proclaim your Death,
O Lord, and profess your
Resurrection, until you
come again.**

REFLECTING ON THE WORD . . . GUIDEPOSTS

It may be noted that in the Gospel of John, Jesus makes seven “I am” self-descriptions. Today’s Gospel emphasizes the seventh and last of Jesus’ solemn “I am” pronouncements: “I am the vine.” Prior to this, elsewhere in John’s gospel Jesus had already identified himself as the living bread, the light of the world, the sheep-gate, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life. Each of those statements reflected on his relationship to the disciples, pledging that he would nourish, guide, protect, and lead them, and endow them with life and true knowledge.

Today’s Gospel passage takes place at the Last Supper. It was one of his last supper discourses, after he had washed the apostles’ feet. Moreover, he had just dismissed Judas, after announcing that he would betray him. He also had already told Peter that he would deny him three times before morning. The other ten apostles would abandon him as well, none of them accompanying him as he was put on trial.

The image of Jesus as the vine and us as the branches crowns all the other “I am” pronouncements. This metaphor goes beyond all that he has said before and paints a picture of what he would later pray: “May all be one, as you Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us— This is the prayer that Jesus said after his last supper discourses and just before he was arrested. By using the image of vine and branches, Jesus explains that we are an intimate, inextricable part of him and of one another.

Sometimes it is said that perhaps if Jesus made that discourse today, he might have used another example from our age instead of the “I am the vine and you are the branches.” Accordingly, he could have said, “I am the light socket, you are the bulb” or I am the electrical outlet and you are the plug.” Unless we connect to him, we don’t give off light, and we have no power. However, this example does not capture the depth or the richness of the “vine” example which pictures our being connected not just to the vine—Jesus, but to everyone else. Read on . . .

A vine does not grow straight up like a tree or most other plants. Its flexible stem hunts for any hold, spiraling around posts, climbing up fences, wrapping around other plants. In doing so it connects everything in its surroundings. As does Jesus. Jesus, the true vine, reaches out to all, and all of us are connected, not just to the vine, Jesus, but to everyone else.

We see this demonstrated in the first reading: Barnabas connected the newly-converted Saul to the Christian community in Jerusalem. The proof that Saul was connected to the true vine (Jesus) was his being connected to the rest of those who are connected to the true vine to form one single community. The vine continues to connect us with our neighbor, across space and time, to a single community in the Lord.

“When Saul or Paul arrived back in Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples there, but it turned out that they were all afraid of him. They even refused to believe that he was a disciple. Some Hellenists even tried to kill him. . . .

Reforming one’s ways can occasion special challenges and is not always instantly rewarding. Many people, if they had experienced Paul’s risks and narrow escapes from death, might have said about their newly adopted faith, “This isn’t worth it.” Why didn’t Paul quit?

Have you ever experienced challenges to your practice of the faith? Do you sometimes keep your Catholic faith hidden from people to avoid risking your reputation?

Today’s gospel says: **REMAIN IN CHRIST.**

Paul became an example of what happens when we “abide or remain in Christ.” We become like Christ, filled with love for God and filled with a zeal to share what we have discovered. Paul’s life was not easy nor is ours. Our faithfulness to God is challenged every day.

Do some challenges arise from inside you? There may be the temptation to tell little lies, to cheat on taxes and spouses. Despite the Resurrection, we still sin. For some, this is so discouraging that they give up. Our message today is to never give up. We are to “**REMAIN IN CHRIST.**”

Today each of us should ask ourselves the question: Do I really know that I am sharing in the very life of God and that God is not an external deity off in the heavens but the very lifeblood and breath within me? Ultimately, this is not something to be grasped only with the intellect. **It requires an experience of God’s presence that transcends our thoughts.**

It is for this reason that I encourage parishioners to practice meditation or centering prayer, to spend time in silence (be alone with God) whether in your own private room or in a chapel or in the park or in any other place that can provide you the atmosphere to become more aware of the presence of God within you. It is also for this reason that once the pandemic is over, our Sunday Mass will be preceded by a Holy Hour before the Exposed Blessed Sacrament.

A little play on a word.

Cut off the last three letters from the word Christian. These same three letters (i, a, and n) make three words which make the statement “I am nothing.” Thus, cut off from Christ, I am nothing.

Long before anyone came up with, "Talk is cheap" and "Don't just talk the talk---walk the walk," the author of 1 John (see today's second reading), wrote "Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth."

Pruning is hard work. It takes deliberate and focused effort. Sometimes, you have to take what seems to be good branches and cut them so they will either grow in a specific direction or will bear future fruit.

A good pruning can enable us to do what 1 John (today's second reading) suggests: "... love not in word or speech but in deed and truth." The best example of this is Paul. In his encounter with God on his way to Damascus, he had been pruned and transformed into a different person – once a persecutor of Christians, now a follower and bold witness to Christ.

Also, in today's gospel we find an answer to the question, "why does a good man suffer?" A person who abides or remains in Christ will readily see his sufferings, trials or struggles as pruning, for God prunes those who are already bearing fruit so that they bear more fruit.

Diocesan Office for Liturgy & Spirituality

Liturgical Minister Formation Workshops.

Online Diocesan Liturgical Formation Workshops for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, lectors, and sacristans are now scheduled in May. In-person workshops will be coming in August and November.

For registration and further information go to:

<http://www.sd catholic.org/workshops>.

I recommend the above to all our present ministers as well as to those who are willing to join the pool.

Our Bishop — Robert McElroy, invites us all to THE DIOCESAN CELEBRATION – A PENTECOST FOR ALL PEOPLE

The Celebration will be held at Good Shepherd Parish (8200 Gold Coast Drive, San Diego, CA 92126) on Saturday, May 22. The outdoor Mass begins at 11 am.

Bishop McElroy with Auxiliary Bishops John Dolan and Ramón Bejarano and clergy will concelebrate this annual Mass with the diverse communities and cultures of the diocese, invoking the Holy Spirit to renew us by building unity, justice and mercy in the Body of Christ.

Everyone is welcome to this extraordinary celebration of our universal Catholic family.

This year's beautiful Pentecost celebration begins the "re-set" of our diocese and parishes as we re-engage our communities as Covid-19 restrictions continue to ease.



It is said that there are two kinds of people, namely: the *givers* and the *takers*. The takers usually eat better but the givers sleep better.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

CELEBRANT:

Jesus told his disciples, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you." Therefore, we have the boldness to pray for our needs and the needs of the whole world.

LECTOR:

1) That Pope Francis and all Church leaders and Christians of every church and denomination, preach the Gospel with the boldness of the apostles Peter and Paul, witnesses to the resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.

2) That nations rich and poor work together to share the world's resources fairly, let us pray to the Lord.

3) For our military, our police, and all who serve in authority to protect people, that the Lord may bless and guide them in their efforts to maintain peace and order, let us pray to the Lord.

4) For high school and college seniors preparing for graduation, and for the parents and teachers who have guided them, let us pray to the Lord.

5) For farmers and ranchers, vine growers and orchardists, for all those whose work brings food and drink to our table, that they may be blessed in their labors, let us pray to the Lord.

6) 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.

CELEBRANT:

Loving God, hear our prayers this day and bring our needs and the needs of the whole world to the fulfillment your love intends. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

A Message from Bishop McElroy:

It is vitally important that all of us receive the Covid vaccine. The Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson are safe and effective. They are fully approved for use at this moment by the teachings of our Church. And as Pope Francis has so clearly taught, receiving the vaccine is not only for ourselves as individuals. It is for everyone that we treasure, to keep them safe and healthy and bring back the joy of life to us all.

... The sooner we are all vaccinated, the sooner we will be able to return to the many joys of our lives that we have missed during this past year of suffering. The vaccines, with our continued masking and social distancing during the coming months, will bring this hateful pandemic to an end."



April 24-25 Sunday Collections:
\$ 1,053.00

Via Online: April 21 to April 27:
\$ 85.00

From the Donation Boxes at the Church Entrance: **\$ 42.00**

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