

Your Lourdes Sunday Liturgy at Home

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2021

“...let us love not in word or speech
but in deed and truth.”

– 1st Letter of John 3:18

“Remain in me, as I remain in you.”

– John 15:4

The readings for this Sunday are a stark reminder of what being “in relationship” means, and what is meant by being fully connected to the life-giving energy at the core of our lives. Our selection from Acts sheds light on effects that a personal encounter with Christ had on Saul’s life. The 1st Letter of John defines love as being actively engaged in relationship with one another. And Jesus declares: “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).

Sociologists note that as we grow more savvy with technology and become more connected to one another within and throughout cyberspace, we are, paradoxically, growing more distant from one another. Cyberspace relationships do not always allow us to detect tone in conversations, and online contacts often fall short on empathy. Social media stickers and emojis are no replacements for a handshake, a face-to-face smile and a needed hug, especially in these days of social distancing. Our Scriptures suggest another pathway to intimacy.

In Acts we find former murderer Saul now becoming Jesus’ disciple, to the consternation of the other disciples who, knowing his background, continue to fear him until Barnabas tells them Saul’s conversion story. Only then is Saul accepted AMong the disciples. Saul is now “in relationship” with Christ, with God, with Barnabas and with the disciples. This wonderful change, this conversion, is confirmed four chapters ahead when during a missionary journey on Cypress Saul is first called Paul (Acts 13:9).

When Moses asked God what should he tell the people when they ask who sent him back to Egypt, God replied “I AM who AM.” Then he added, “This is what you will tell the Israelites” ‘I AM has sent me to you.”

This then is the background for the seven “I AM” statements in John’s Gospel, which are the follows:

- “I AM the bread of life....” (John 6:35)
- “I AM the light of the world....” (John 8:12)
- “I AM the gate for the sheep....” (John 10:7)
- “I AM the good shepherd...” (John 10:11)
- “I AM the resurrection and the life....” (John 11:25)
- “I AM the way and the truth and the life....” (John 14:6)
- “I AM the vine, you are the branches.” (John 15:5)

Jesus reinforces the point that he is the vine and informs the disciples that they are the branches. Jesus has unequivocally defined for his disciples the relationship that exists between him and them. In a more direct manner than heard earlier, Jesus emphatically makes the point that they can do nothing without him.

John’s narrative closes on an encouraging note. Just as the disciples remain faithful to Jesus, so Jesus and God will remain faithful to them and will respond to them whenever they are in need. God will become manifest through the fruit that the disciples will bear. What is at stake here is the transfer of God’s own life through Jesus to the disciples and into the world. Thus, being in relationship with God can be a transformative experience for all creation.

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Prelude: “This Is the Day,” Leon C. Roberts:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QewO8Dv5vz4>

Greeting: In the name of the Father, † and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

Assembly: Amen

Penitential Rite:

Lord Jesus, you call us to be branches on the vine that is you:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to remain in this deep relationship:
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you have promised that we will bear much fruit:
Lord, have mercy.

Opening Prayer:

O God,
you graft us onto Christ, the true vine,
and, with tireless care,
you nurture our growth in knowledge and reverence.

Tend the vineyard of your Church,
that in Christ each branch may bring forth to the glory of your nAME
abundant fruits of faith and love.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the resurrection and the life, who
lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever
and ever.

Let the church say – Amen.

**Readings for the Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year B
May 2, 2021****1st Reading – Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31**

²⁶ 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.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord.

²⁹ He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him.

³⁰ And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus.

³¹ 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.....Thanks be to God.

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

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

²⁶ I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the LORD.

²⁷ The lowly shall eat their fill;
they who seek the LORD shall praise him:
“May your hearts live forever!”

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

²⁸ All the ends of the earth
shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of the nations
shall bow down before him.

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

³⁰ To him alone shall bow down
all who sleep in the earth;
before him shall bend
all who go down into the dust.

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

³¹ And to him my soul shall live;
my descendants shall serve him.

³² 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. I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

2nd Reading – 1 Letter of John 3:18-24

¹⁸ Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

¹⁹ Now this is how we shall know that we belong to the truth and reassure our hearts before him

²⁰ in whatever our hearts condemn, for God is greater than our hearts and knows everything.

²¹ Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence in God

²² and receive from him whatever we ask, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.

²³ 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.

²⁴ 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.....Thanks be to God.

Gospel – The Gospel According to John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples:

¹ “I AM the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

² 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.

³ You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ 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.

⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

⁸ By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.”

The Gospel of the Lord.....Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Before moving into reflection, listen to “If He Changed My Name” by Nina Simone:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dDFcSOztp0>

Reflection Prompts:

- The letter of John challenges us to put are Christian love into action. What ways in this “socially distant” time can you do deeds of truth and justice?
- Suppose you asked Jesus to “change” your name? What would be all you? How would that name connect to your discipleship?

Meditation Prompts:

- Ask Christ to prune in you whatever impedes your “bearing much fruit.”
- Which “branches” in your life need to be clipped back?

After this meditative period, you could listen to Walter Hawkins’ “God Will Open Doors” (1978)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kJB87nLYn8>

Then move into the intercessions followed by singing or reciting the Lord’s Prayer.

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS – May 2, 2021
FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Presider: We pray now for the needs of the world, especially for those who live on the margins of society.

Worship Leader

1. For the life-giving connection we have with Jesus, the true vine, to be nourished and deepened. We pray: **Renew us, O God.** (RESPOND: **Renew us, O God.**)
2. For the family of nations in all its rich diversity: may people everywhere turn from war and violence, and seek justice and peace, not in word or speech, but in truth and deed. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
3. For all who have suffered on behalf of those in need, especially civil rights martyrs and first responders. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
4. For the success of our Moving Forward in Faith cAMpaign to build a new spiritual home. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
5. For pastors and teachers, catechist and theologians, mystics and prayer leaders, who are dedicated to enhancing our relationship to Christ. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
6. For greater cooperation by citizens in following COVID-19 safety practices, such as masking and distancing. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
7. For long-term commitments to eradicate Racism and White Supremacy from American life. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
8. For all those who are unemployed or underpaid, that they find the jobs with living wages and humane benefits. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**

9. For all our loved ones in the military and their families, that they be returned to us safely and experience a welcoming community. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
10. For all those who are separated from us by infirmity, especially those afflicted by COVID-19, and for all those living with HIV and AIDS, that they know our community's care for them. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
11. For all the dead, that they see God face to face, especially Angela & Anthony Lucas, for whom this Mass is being celebrated. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**
12. Please share any intention you have [PAUSE.....] as well as all our own needs. We pray: **Renew us, O God.**

Presider: Loving God, we pray for the courage to walk the path we entered at baptism. Help us to rely on you and on one another as we strive to faithfully walk where Jesus walked. We ask this in his holy name. LET THE CHURCH SAY.....AMEN!

Lord's Prayer

Closing Song

Walter Hawkins' "Dear Jesus I Love You" sung by Lynette Hawkins, ("Baby Sis"): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QewO8Dv5vz4>

Closing Prayer

God of unfailing mercy,
who redeemed us and adopted us as your children, look upon us with tender love,
that we who believe in Christ
may enjoy true freedom
and enter our promised inheritance.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

LET THE CHURCH SAY: AMEN

Blessing:

May the God who joined you to Christ's resurrection
by faith and baptism lead you to live justly
and so bring you to your home in heaven.

LET THE CHURCH SAY: AMEN

Closing Hymn

I Want to be a Follower of Christ

by J.W. Harris

I want to be a follower of Christ,
I want to be one of his disciples.
I want to live in the newness of life,
Just let me be a follower of Christ.

What do I have to do?
What do I have to say?
How do I have to walk each and ev'ry day?
Tell me what does it cost if I carry the cross?
Just let me be a follower of Christ.