

1. Read — Read the verses slowly and prayerfully several times. Write down any words or phrases that seem to stand out:

2. Meditate — Now begin to reflect on the verses and ask God what it means and how he wants to speak to you through the passage. **God what are you saying to me through this?**

3. Pray — Respond from your heart to what God has been saying to you. **What do you want me to know?** Write down your prayer to him or record whatever he says to you.

4. Contemplate — Be quiet before the Lord enjoying His presence.
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**How is God calling you to act in response to what he has shown you?**

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# Quick Connect

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## **Gospel Reading – John 15:1-8 – Roman Missal**

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 everyone 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.

## **Spiritual Reading** *From Saint Elizabeth of the Trinity*

O Lord, increase my faith in Your love, so that I may be able to say to You in all truth: “I have known and have believed the charity which God hath to me.” It seems to me that this is the greatest act of our faith, the most beautiful way to render You love for love; in it is the hidden secret of which St. Paul speaks, a secret which my soul longs to understand, because in understanding it, I shall thrill with joy. Make me capable of believing in Your exceeding love for me. Then I shall not stop at preferences or feelings. It will matter little if I feel Your presence or not, whether You send me joy or suffering. I shall believe in Your love and that will suffice. Grant, O God, that my soul may penetrate into Your depths and remain there, rooted and founded in love. O Lord, when I ponder within myself Your immensity, Your faithfulness, the proofs of love You have shown me, and Your benefits, and then look at myself and see how I have outraged You, I can only turn upon my soul with a profound feeling of contempt; yet this self-contempt is not strong enough to cast me down as low as I would wish. O Lord, plunge me into humility! It seems to me that to be plunged into humility is to be plunged into You; for, living in You who are the Truth, I cannot fail to realize my nothingness. The humble soul is the chosen recipient, the vessel capable of receiving then, O Lord, that I may humble, and make me understand that the humble soul will never put You high enough or itself low enough.

## **Vine and Branches - Lesson and Discussion**

*“I am the vine, you are the branches”*

The mercy of the Lord is without limit, because Our Lord is eternal and

without limit. In the Easter season, the Gospels are a witness to the mercy of God. The prophet Zechariah said, “Strike the shepherd that the sheep may be dispersed.”[1] When Jesus was crucified, the sheep (disciples) dispersed. On the first day, when He had risen, Jesus immediately begins to unite what was scattered. Two disciples, the two on their way to Emmaus, have removed themselves from the fold and are leaving Jerusalem. Jesus goes out and gets them; He brings them back. During Cycle B, this is the Gospel for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter. The disciples on the road to Emmaus, show us the weakness of our humanity, our nature to scatter, run, and hide. They were nothing and we are nothing without our Shepherd. In Cycle B, the Gospel for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter is The Good Shepherd.

**When is a time when we have scattered, ran, and hid from God? How did He come and get us?**

**Who is the only one who is able to go out and get the scattered flock?** It is the Good Shepherd. In our weakness and fear, it is Jesus Himself that comes out to meet us and gather us back in.

**What does He bring us back to?** Jesus, the Good Shepherd brings us back not just to the community, not just to other disciples, but to Himself. In just five sentences, Jesus speaks the word, “remain” eight times. “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...Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither...If you remain in me and my words remain in you.” He brings us back so that we may remain with Him and so that He may remain with us. This is seen in the Mass when at the Agnus Dei (Lamb of God), the host, which is Jesus’s Body is broken and shown to the congregation. We witness the brokenness, the scattering. The next part of the Mass is Communion, when the faithful are brought back in communion with Our Lord. We receive Him, not broken but whole and entire. At each Mass, Jesus brings His scattered flock back to remain in Him. The Mass is the fulfillment of His words in the Bread of Life discourse. “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him.”[2]

It is in today’s Gospel that we see the culmination of the previous two Sunday Gospels in the following pattern:

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – The Road to Emmaus – Our tendency to scatter, run and hide (concupiscence)  
 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – The Good Shepherd – We have a loving shepherd that brings us back, saves us  
 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter – The Vine and Branches – He desires to remain in us and for us to remain in Him

with concupiscence. **What is concupiscence?** Concupiscence: Human

appetites or desires which remain disordered due to the temporal consequences of original sin, which remain even after Baptism, and which produce an inclination to sin.[3] Just as the disciples were “scattered” so too our human appetites or desires are “scattered”. Our appetites or desires are not integrated, but rather segregated.

**What is the result when human appetites and desires are segregated?** When human appetites and desires are scattered and not ordered toward God, they are disordered. At this point the human acts much like an animal. **What is the basic desire of an animal?** To eat, sleep, and reproduce. When a human does not order his desires toward God, he quickly falls into a life only of eating, sleeping and reproduction. In the case of reproduction, many times man thinks and acts less than an animal. Reproduction is not desired and a contraceptive, anti-reproductive, mentality is believed and practiced. “Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality with the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being.”[4]

**What is the result when human appetites and desires are integrated, as is the case with the sexual desires through chastity?** There is an inner unity of man between body and soul. In other words, the divine life that dwells in our soul is united with our body and act as one. There is peace. The desires and appetites are ordered toward God and find rest in God. It is the Good Shepherd that integrates and orders our segregated, disordered desires. **Once our body and soul are in unity, and our desires and appetites are ordered, what does the disciple do?** We must keep the unity and order. To remain in Christ is to remain in order and to have unity of body and soul. In the natural order once something is at rest it will stay at rest until acted upon by an external force.

**What are the external forces that attempt to bring about disunity and disorder in the spiritual life?** The devil does not want us to be ordered toward God and so from the beginning his goal is to bring separation between man and God; creature and creator. In the garden he sows doubt in the mind of man when he says, “Did God really tell you not to eat from any of the trees in the garden...You certainly will not die! No, God knows well that the moment you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad.”[5] In last Sunday’s Gospel (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter) we read about this ancient enemy. It is Satan, the one that promises that man won’t die, that seeks only death. “A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy.”[6] Death is the separation between body and soul. Not only does Satan desire the physical death of the disciple, but he most especially desires the spiritual death of a disciple which is disunity of body and soul and disorder of appetites and desires. We must remember that Satan is an external force and we want to keep it that way. This is why the Church offers to us many forms of exorcisms, including the first exorcism that occurs at our Baptism.

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