

2021 May 02

## Fifth Sunday of Easter.

### Reading:

**First:** Acts 9.26-31, "They were all afraid of him (Saul), for they did not believe that he was a disciple." (26b)

**The Psalm:** 22 "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord." (27a)

**Second:** 1 John 3. '18-24, "Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have boldness before God." (21)

**The Gospel:** John 15.1-8, "Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit." (2b)

### **Consequence for everything**

We often say that there will be consequences for whatever we do, or we fail to do. After his conversion Saul, who was later named Paul the Apostle, for some time experienced rejection from the other disciples and believers. They were afraid of him. This was the consequence of his persecuting the church before he was called and anointed by God. Hence consequences are on the way of both the sinner and the saint. However, God is the vine dresser pruning and removing the unproductive branches, making the other branches more productive.

Paul's was an experience of rejection by the very same followers of the Way of Jesus whom Paul thought were his brothers and sisters in Christ. He had even to go into seclusion in a faraway place to avoid that intolerable rejection. Later Barnabas had to go in search of him and bring him back to the community and strengthen him for the great mission to which Jesus called him. It was a testing time for Paul. The lesson we need to learn is that we will have such testing times in our life, in fact, all through our lives. This is to instruct, groom and make us strong and ready for the mission God is calling us. We need to wait for the right time God has designed and assigned for us.

In the gospel Jesus speaks about his father as the vine-grower who removes every unproductive branch and prunes those productive ones for greater yield. Removing the unproductive means cutting them off and burning them. Pruning means dressing up and grooming to make them more productive. Both these acts are consequences, one of inaction and the other of action. Jesus takes examples from the nature and from our everyday lives and illustrates the working of God with our spirit. While we claim to be in the way of God it is highly salutary to reflect as often as possible if we are truly living and productive branches.

St. John in his letter reaffirms the necessity of our active involvement in the process of living as followers of Jesus and working as a his disciples. He invites us to love not in word or speech alone but in truth and action. Truth in us flows from our attachment to the source of truth. God and Jesus in God is the only One, Truth, and Beauty. Our action is strengthened only because of this our attachment to the Truth. Jesus is the personification of this Truth. That is why he said, "*I am the Truth, the Way and the Life.*" (John 14.7) The certainty of our attachment to truth is certified by the Spirit of God dwelling in us. Hence it is important to make sure that the Spirit of God has a sure place in us. This is what Jesus means when he told us to abide in him as he abides in us. This mutual abiding is the life breath in our life and mission as the disciples of Jesus and this mutual abiding alone will strengthen us to be the living stones, building up the kingdom of the God here and now on earth. Be a living stone!

Fr. George

*(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)*

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