

WORDS FROM THE PASTOR

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 2nd, 2021

Calendar:

- **05/01/21 Saturday:** 7PM Confirmation and First Eucharist Liturgy at St. Stanislaus, Warsaw, ND. There will be 5PM Saturday Evening Mass at Sts. Peter & Paul, Bechyne, ND.
- **05/06/21 Thursday:** 10AM Burial Service for Debbie Novak – St. Joseph's Cemetery, Lankin, ND
- **05/06/21 Thursday:** 11AM Burial Service for Marge Machart – St. Joseph's Cemetery, Lankin, ND
- **05/06/21 Thursday:** 3PM to 5PM Fr. Lefor hosts 1370 AM Catholic Radio Real Presence Live Drive Spring Fund Raiser. Call in to support 1-877-795-0122
- **05/07/21 Friday:** First Friday Men's Prayer Breakfast St. John's. 5:30 Breakfast; 6AM Discussion and Prayer; 7AM Eucharistic Adoration; 8AM Holy Sacrifice of the Mass
- **05/08/21 Saturday:** 6:15 PM First Eucharist Potluck Celebration Sts. Peter & Paul, Bechyne

Pastor's Notes:

- **Starting May 1st, 2021 the general obligation to attend Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation is reinstated in the Diocese of Fargo. This does not apply to those who are directly affected by Covid or the health crisis. For any questions please consult your pastor.**
- A Huge Thank You from Fr. Lefor to all the parents and sponsors of our Confirmandi. These past six weeks of preparation, sessions, and retreat have been inspiring. Thank you for all the sacrifices you have made to help make this a meaningful and memorable experience for our children. Also, a special thank you to Julie Zikmund and all who assisted Julie, tirelessly and generously behind the scenes to make all of the special events possible. Let us continue to hold one another in prayer and encouragement to help our children remain lifelong intentional Catholics who are on fire for their faith!

- A new Tri-Parish Web page has been launched. Effective immediately the former web page plbtriparish.org is no longer functioning. The New Webpage can be found at plbnd.org. A huge thank you to Nancy Conway for all of the labor she has put into getting the new web page up and running. I am open to suggestions from parishioners on how to make the new page more user friendly. If there are good suggestions for content please let me know.

The Vine and the Branches: To this day, the grapevine remains a symbol of Israel as it did in the Old Testament. The imagery was one in which God was the vine trunk and the Jews were the branches that received life from that trunk. Israel had been the vine, into which all people had to connect to worship God. But when Jesus said, “I am the vine,” He clearly stated that He was the only way to God the Father and eternal life in heaven. Jesus is stating that He is God. Statements of this nature were extremely difficult for the disciples to understand and even more difficult for anyone else to understand because all rabbinic teachings said that a man could not be God nor could God be a man. Basically they were blocked from comprehending the Divinity of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah revealed God’s purpose for the nation with the figurative description of a vineyard (Is 5:1-7). Israel was God’s chosen vineyard. Therefore, it is only natural that Jesus would refer to His disciples in the same motif. He told them that without Him, they could do nothing, but with Him, they could perform greater miracles than He had performed. In essence, Jesus was and continues to be the vine while the apostles, disciples, and believers were the branches. They were “yoked” together to produce fruit. The disciples could not miss the imagery of the conversation they had with Jesus in the temple. Over the entrance door was a large grapevine, carved in stone. It had been covered with gold, paid for by wealthy contributors who had their names inscribed in the gold leaves. The vine was an object of incredible beauty. However, Israel had become an unfruitful vine; that is why Jesus referred to Himself as the “true” vine. On an interesting side note, the term “vineyard keeper” is better translated as “gardener” as it is translated from the Greek term *georgos*, meaning farmer. It is God, the Farmer, who prunes (meaning to “cleanse”) the vine from dead and useless branches. **“Every branch in Me that does not produce fruit He removes.”** Grapes have two kinds of branches – those that produce fruit and those that do not. The unproductive branches are pruned in December and January as not to drain strength from the productive branches. Pruned branches are then used for cooking fuel. **“Throw them into the fire, and they are burned.”** Jesus clearly spoke of eternal death for those who refused His words and work. He is the only way, the only life, and the only truth that leads to eternal life. **“You produce much fruit.”** The difficulty with this passage in John 15:8 is the interpretation of the word “fruit.” The Western cultural understanding suggests work or employment that would advance the Kingdom of God. And while there is truth to this goal, the fruit here is a reference to the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5:22-23 as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (cf. Eph. 5:9; Phl. 1:11). This fruit is the major element in one’s life, whereby he becomes renewed in the likeness of God that was forfeited at the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. This fruit cannot be self-produced; it can only come from above. As the Holy Spirit prunes the lives of the believers, new spiritual growth can come forth to produce this fruit (cf. Jn. 15:6; 1 Cor. 3:11) and in this way the Father is honored and glorified.

St. John Nepomucene, St. Joseph, and Sts. Peter & Paul, Pray for Us!