



**Fifth Sunday of Easter - B**  
**May 2, 2021**  
**John 15:1-8**

**Background on the Gospel:**

This year on the fifth Sunday of Easter we are asked to contemplate our relationship with the risen Lord and each other by means of the vine and the branches. The people of Israel had understood themselves as God's precious and beloved vine, transplanted from Egypt, but sadly this vine failed to bear fruit and was destroyed. Jesus comes as the "true" vine; He is the fulfillment of what the Father wanted.

In John 15, the focus is on our union with the Lord: as branches cannot exist apart from the vine, we, too, will wither and die or else be cut off and burnt. To remain on the vine is not a "passive" thing; we must "bear fruit" (mentioned six times in these verses) and we do that by "remaining" in Christ (mentioned eleven times in these verses). The "fruit" is actually not our doing but is Christ's love flowing and flowering through us.

The vine and branches also reminds us that our "abiding" in the Lord (the vine) also means communion with the whole Church: one same "life-blood" flows through the "arteries and veins" of this vine. We are fruitful when in union with Christ and each other. And as we are all one in Christ we give glory to the Father: Trinitarian life and love become manifest to the world through our Eucharistic sharing of one bread and one cup and through "joint service" and witness in the world.

**Thoughts for prayer and reflection:**

- 1) *The image or parable of the vine proclaims the profound sharing going on between us and the Lord Jesus. Last week we prayed considering Christ as a loving and self-sacrificing shepherd calling and drawing us into one flock under His guidelines. But in the vine, we are sharing one same life with Him and each other!*

*Meditate on this theme of "abiding in" Christ (along with all others) and Christ abiding in each of us. We do not survive alone. We need each other. Consider your prayer and your way of thinking: is your spirituality very "privatized" ("me and Jesus") or communal? Do you always pray for the well-being of all branches of the vine (even those who have hurt you)?*

- 2) *Contemplate the command to bear fruit. Remember: the fruit we bear is not really anything we can boast about; it is the result of Christ's love flowing through us. What "fruits" are you bearing at this time because of God's goodness dwelling in you: a peaceful listening presence? A forgiving heart? A trusting openness? Welcoming strangers or the marginalized?*
- 3) *Jesus noted that branches which do bear fruit will then be pruned or purified so that they can bear more fruit. How is the Lord allowing me to be purified right now (perhaps experiencing health concerns, relationship issues, loss of control/power, disappointments, spiritual darkness)? Perhaps the point of pruning good branches is to make sure we never settle for mediocrity?*