

5th Sunday of Easter, 2 May 2021

Scriptures: Acts 9:26-31; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1-8

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the Gospel for this weekend, Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper, that if they are to survive, they must remain close to him.

Jesus uses the image of the vineyard, and in a sense identifies himself with it by saying: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser."

In other words, if the disciples are to survive and thrive, then they must be branches of Jesus, the vine. And just as a vine is pruned to make it more fruitful, so too the disciples will also grow by being tested in their faith.

Jesus tells them to remain close to him and have the living sap flowing in their branches, or else they will shrivel up.

Jesus insists that at the very heart of their faith there is this close personal relationship with Jesus. He says: "Make your home in me, as I make mine in you".

Just as we are united in Christ, so will we be united through Jesus to our loving God. But this experience is not just for special people. Rather, God's spirit is given to everyone. All are called to have this "mystic" experience of being so close to Jesus in their daily life that they produce much good in our world.

Sometimes people get carried away with the external symbols of religious faith. That is, there is always the danger of going through the motions or emotions, but dying on the vine. The community of faith will shrivel up unless its members have the sap of the living Christ flowing through them.

The Eucharist is the center of nourishment for our spiritual lives. The Eucharist gives us the strength to live as true followers of Jesus, regardless of the challenges, including persecution. We need the strength of the Eucharistic meal, the Mass that we celebrate together.

As the noted Catholic theologian Karl Rahner pointed out, it is much more difficult now to be carried along by other people's faith in a society that is both secular and even hostile to our religious beliefs.

How can we live our faith in ways that will show the world that we Christians are alive and thriving well?

We do not need to be mystics like some of the great saints. We need only to make certain that our practice of our faith is firmly rooted on a close personal relationship with Jesus.

We don't at first have to do anything but rather to be at peace in his presence, to allow Jesus to dwell in us. Then we can share a deep communion with him, as we receive him in the Eucharist (Holy Communion) at Mass. His real presence within us gives us new life.

If we do have this close relationship of the branch to the "true vine", then it will produce much good in the way we love God and the way we love one another.

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