

Church of the Divine Love

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

MAY 2, 2021 10:15 A.M.

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence after the candles are lit

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#439 – What wondrous love is this**

Opening Acclamation for Easter page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Acts 8:26-40**

Psalm 22:24-30

Second Lesson: **1 John 4:7-21**

Gradual Hymn **#529 – In Christ there is no East or West**

Gospel: **John 15:108**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn – **#379 – God is Love**

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A page 361

Sanctus page 362

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread page 364

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn – **#298 – All who believe and are baptized**

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Dismissal Hymn **#471 – We sing the praise of him who died**

Dismissa

Sermon Sunday May 2nd, 2021

Acts 8: 26-40; Psalm 22: 24-30; 1 John 4: 7-21; John 15: 1-8

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today's Scripture selections emphasize the need for Christians to abide in Christ as a condition for producing fruits of kindness, mercy, charity, and holiness. The word from God through which our risen Savior speaks to us is John 15. Some branches produce fruit and are pruned, cared for, and nurtured. Some branches do not produce fruit and are removed, thrown away and burned.

We are a people of productivity. It is, for the most part, the standard by how we live and the measure of our success. It is built into our lives everywhere. Productivity is the basis of our economic system. Those who produce are rewarded and get more. Those who do not produce are thrown out. Within our educational system the students who do well, and produce are recognized and supported while those who do not produce get lost in the system. Professors know well the mantra, "Publish or perish." Careers and promotions are based on productivity. Productivity at some level is at the core of the debates around poverty, welfare, healthcare, and the elderly. They do not produce and our care of and for them often reflects what we think of that.

We have been convinced that productivity is the goal and only the fittest survive. I wonder if that is not how many of us live our spiritual lives. How many of us have been told, in some form or fashion, or come to believe that pruned branches go to heaven and removed branches go to hell? Pruned branches produced so they are rewarded while non-productive branches are punished. In that misunderstanding fruit is God's demand upon our life and how we appease God. If we are not careful, we will get stuck categorizing ourselves and one another into fruit bearing or non-fruit bearing branches. There is, however, a deeper issue than the production of fruit. Productivity does not usually create deep abiding and intimate relationships. It creates transactions. Jesus is not talking about or demanding productivity. He wants and offers connectivity, relationship, and intimacy.

We need pruning in our Christian life. Cutting out of our lives everything that is contrary to the spirit of Jesus and renewing our commitment to Christian ideals in our lives every day is the first type of self-imposed pruning expected of us. A second means of pruning is to practice self-control over our evil inclinations, sinful addictions, and aberrations. Cordial mingling in our neighborhood and society with people of different cultures, races, religions, and orientations also enables us to prune away our selfish, judgmental, and prejudicial tendencies as we treat others in the society with Christian charity, and strengthens us, enabling us to face with the courage of our Christian convictions the pain, suffering, contradictions, and difficulties He permits to enter our lives. We need to abide in Christ and let Christ abide in us: The four Gospels teach us how to become true disciples of Jesus and how to abide in him as branches abide in the main trunk of the vine, drawing their life from it. Personal and liturgical prayers, frequenting of the Sacraments of the Holy Eucharist and Reconciliation, daily, meditative reading of Scripture, and our loving, mutual forgiveness exchanged with everyone enable us to abide in Jesus, the true Vine, as fruit-bearing branches.

What fruit am I producing? How much? Is it an acceptable quality? Those are good questions if we understand and ask them diagnostically, as questions not about the quantity of our lives but the quality of our lives. That is what Jesus is after. That is the deeper question he is asking. It is the invitation to join the conversation, jump into the game, to participate, and to live fully alive. That only happens when the life, the love, and the goodness and holiness of Christ flow in us. We become an extension of and manifest his life, love, and holiness.

We live in an interconnected world. You connect on Facebook with your friends. The Internet connects us in so many ways beyond social networks. How much of our shopping, emailing, banking, doctoring, even the power grid, touches the Internet even if you do not own a computer? Or think of how phones connect us today, not only in our homes but wherever we are in range of a cell tower. In this interconnected world we can lose track of the most important connection of all. You, Sunday school students have heard about it at the end of every Kid's Connection video for years, as they close with the words: Stay connected to Jesus. It is a relationship of union even as a branch is united to the vine. We live our lives as one. This is not just about relationship with Jesus; it affects and is the basis for our relationships with one another. Love for Jesus, one another, and we become one love. We soon discover we are living one life and the fruit of that life and loves abundant, overflowing to the glory of the vine grower. Because it is only the vine grower that can make fruits happen. Only God know when the time is to plant, to prune, and to harvest. And we soon discover that God is both the vine grower and the tree. We are just branches.

Resurrection people overcome our fear of loss when we understand that intentional giving up on a faded flower can lead to a new bouquet. The cross was a pruning, not of Jesus, but of those who witnessed it and were transformed by it, and most of all of death itself. The empty tomb ushered in the flourishing of a new harvest with fresh buds and new life sprouting everywhere. The fruit yielded by that harvest is love. The abundant, overwhelming, and surpassing love of God flourishes from the vine to and through the branches. Jesus, Love Embodied, connects us as beloved of God, recipients, and carriers of that love. We are pruned to love more. That Love surrounds us, upholds us, nourishes, and refreshes us. That Love makes us love, both verb and noun—who we are and what we do.

And, when we become that love, we can truly embrace the promise of this passage within its context: "Ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." This is not a blanket statement that every prayer we utter will be answered, but a covenantal promise that when we immersed in Christ as the Revealed Love of God, our requests will be aligned with God's will for us. So, let's recognize that the only thing is asked of us is to remain connected with the vine. Connection is the key. As it is said in today's Gospel, "those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. **AMEN!**

(Bishop's Directive – When attending services we are all required to wear a mask, use hand sanitizer, sign in with name and phone number for tracing purposes, and only sit in pews with decals.)

5 EASTER

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
(also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:00 AM AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP
8:00 PM AA MEETING

SATURDAY

10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

6 EASTER

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

Prayer for Grace and Favor :

Dear God, we ask that you provide for our needs, we ask for your grace and favor. We pray for your blessings to cover us; we pray that you would help us to prosper and make every plan that you have birthed in our heart to succeed. We pray that others would take notice of your goodness and could not help but say, "these are the ones that the Lord has blessed." Shine your light in us, through us. May we make a difference in this world, for your glory and purposes. Set your way before us. May all your plans succeed. We may reflect your peace and hope to a world that so desperately needs your presence and healing. In Jesus Name, Amen.

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Barbara Curran	Girard Bishop
Dina Palkowski	Margaret
Frances & Donna Mongelli	Bernie Walther
Nathan Treadwell	Jerry & Family
Tyler Gorman	Kim
Chris Dickson	Rachael
Michael Echevarria	Warren
Andy	Bill Conklin
Michael & Family	Anthony Paribello
Martinisi Family	Edward Lent
Lois Kessler	Kate Jones
Kathleen	Del
Irene	Arlene Goodenough
Children who are ill:	Christopher and his family
Franklin Tenesaca	Ciara
Aidan	Gabriel