

Church of the Divine Love
FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
APRIL 28, 2024 10:15 AM
HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

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

Opening Acclamation for Easter page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung)

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 **#294 – Baptized in water**

Gospel: **John 15:1-8**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#296 – We know that Christ is raised**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer B	page 367
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration (printed on insert)	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #324 – Let all mortal flesh keep silence	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn – Baptized (on insert)	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday April 28, 2024

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

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

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 isn't 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 the means by which we appease God. If we are not careful, we'll 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.

Fruit or the lack thereof is a manifestation of our interior life and health. It describes and reveals whether we are living connected or disconnected lives. Fruit production is the natural consequence of staying connected. You can see that in long-term friendships, marriages, community loyalty. We do not choose whether or not we produce fruit. We do, however, choose where we abide and how we stay connected. You know how that is. Sometimes we lose touch with a particular person. We no longer know where he or she is, what she is doing, or what is happening in her life. One day we run into him or her. It's a bit awkward. No one is sure what to say. There's not much to talk about. There was no deep abiding presence, the connection is lost, and it seems as if what was has been thrown away. Other people we run into after five or ten years and the conversation immediately picks up where we left off those many years ago. Even though we were apart we never left each other. There was and remains a connection and mutual abiding that time, distance, and the circumstances of life cannot sever.

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's 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. 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 ourselves become one love. We soon discover we are living one life and the fruit of that life and love is abundant, overflowing, and Father glorifying.

I wonder if we sometimes let our productivity highjack our fruitfulness and wholeheartedness. We get the job done and we pay our way, but at what cost? What have you lost in your life today by living from a place of productivity rather than wholeheartedness? I'm not suggesting we ought not be productive. Some things just need to be done. But what if true productivity arises from wholeheartedness and not in opposition to it? What if wholeheartedness and not productivity was our default mode? I think we all want to live fruitful and wholehearted lives. It's what we want for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, our friends. Most of us probably struggle to find it. I think that's, at least in part, why we show up here each Sunday. It's why we follow Jesus. We see in him what we want for ourselves – wholeheartedness. And let's be honest. Jesus wasn't overly successful, productive, or accomplished. He didn't work. He depended on benefactors to pay his way. And there's just not much to go on a resume.

Born in Bethlehem. A runaway at twelve. Baptized at thirty. Itinerant rabbi for three years. Dead at thirty-three. Resurrected three days later. What did he really do on a daily basis?

For three years he showed up. He was present. He listened. He loved. He connected with people. He prayed. He was faithful and obedient. He told stories about life and finding meaning. He offered mercy and forgiveness. He shared meals. He was compassionate. He touched the hurting and broken places in people's lives. He had a vision for a new life and a different way of being in the world. He offered hope. He pointed to a life beyond his own. He helped people connect with themselves, one another, and God. He didn't do all that much, but he made a huge difference. In short, he was more fruitful than productive. That's how I want to live, don't you? I want my life to matter. I want my life to have meaning. I want to give myself to what is worthwhile. I want to make a difference. I want to give priority to people and relationships. I want to be deeply connected. I want to blossom and grow. I want to be fruitful and multiply. And here's the hard part about that kind of life. It comes only by removing the branches in our life that do not bear fruit and pruning those that do. Either way we're going to be cut. And I wonder what that means for you today?

It is by having Jesus' words abide in our hearts and by believing in His words and teachings that we can be said to be abiding by Him. Jesus knew that the disciples would face great confusion and persecution during the death of Christ and even after His resurrection, respectively. For this reason, Jesus told His disciples to abide in the word of God, to allow God's word to remain in them so that they would remain strong amidst the challenges which would surely come. And if we believe in the words He said and cherish them, then we will be motivated to live a life bound to Christ: The One who invites us into a life of spiritual abundance!

In John's Gospel, a great many words are set on describing this process of abiding and resting in God. Chapter 15 is no exception. Reading the words of Jesus should motivate us to more excitedly and fully rest in Him. We find peace in His words and strength in His teaching. Our lives are blessed by the very invitation to abide in Christ, and the process of fruit-bearing is as much a way to honor God as it is to bless us. So, live a life that is focused on setting Christ as Lord, relying on the Holy Spirit Himself to empower you and unite you with Christ. Once we do that, the spiritual depth of our prayers will be greater, and our wills shall be in alignment with what God has for us! **Amen.**

5 EASTER	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	

SAURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
6 EASTER	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Deb Giordano	Jess Berbeck
Coffee	Jess Berbeck	Prossers

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Saturday, June 1st – Clean-up Day

Sunday, June 2nd – Closing of Nursery School with Bishop Hyde

Sunday, June 9th – 9AM services begin

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Manetta Family	Betty Curley	Jess
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
John Mulligan	John Rocco	Judy

Warren	Donna A.	Kristen
Christopher	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Jerry & Family	Phil Ryder	Henry
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Beverly Noel	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Ciara	Jan
Grace Schinella	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Michael & Family	Matthew Treasure	Mo
Michelle & Baby	Marjorie Guerrier.	
Jean Estinvil Quatorze		

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disaster.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

To add or make changes to prayer list during the week, email
Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the
spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you,

from coldness of heart, and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen