

[Readings: Acts 9:26-31; Psalm 22; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1-8]

Have you ever heard the expression, “Make yourself at home?” That means that you are a guest in someone’s home, and they want you to feel as if it is your home. There is an Italian expression that says you should only visit for no longer than three days: “Ospidi sono come pesce, dopo tre giorni, puta!” Guests are like fish, after three days you have to throw them out!

There is an important word in two of our three Readings this morning: “remain.” In the original Greek, the word means to dwell, or to indwell, to make a home inside. That’s what Jesus wants to do with each one of us. He wants to make Himself at home within our hearts. How do we do this? He says, by keeping His commandments. By loving in deed as well as words.

When have you forgiven someone once hostile to you? When have you ever been like Barnabas, welcoming back to the community those once estranged from it?

Paul proved his repentance through action. Do you do the same and encourage the same in others? Do you love by your actions as well as your words?

In what ways do you maintain your connection to the true vine of Jesus? How does this relationship bear fruit in your life? How is God glorified in you?

Today’s Gospel talks about vines and branches. Most of us are city people, and we don’t know much about this kind of work. But those who do work in vineyards know two things: you have to keep the vines off the ground, and you have to prune or trim the branches to keep them healthy and to produce much fruit. If you leave a grape vine on the ground, each of the individual branches will try to take root in the ground. Each branch competes for the soil, the nutrients and the water, and they don’t survive. By themselves, whatever grapes are produced are small, tiny and bitter. You cannot eat them and you cannot use them to make wine.

The Italians were the first to build what we call trellises. These are wooden frames, usually in the shape of arches that you would wrap the vines

around to keep them off the ground and expose them to the sunlight. Their branches would produce big, juicy grapes. But the branches need to be trimmed to bring forth fruit, and, most importantly, the branches need to be connected to the vine in order to receive food, nutrients and water. If the branches are cut off from the vine, the branches die.

If we are connected with the Lord, the St. John says, "Ask whatever you want, and it will be given to you." "OK Lord, I want to win the \$300 Million Lotto, to drive a Mercedes, and to live in a million dollar home!" Will Jesus give this to me because I asked for it? No! Because there is a very important condition: We need to be doing God's will, and not ours. If everything we think, everything we say and everything we do is according to God's will, then whatever we ask God we will receive because we are doing what GOD wants us to do, NOT what WE want to do! This is how we stay connected with Jesus. The best prayer ever is this: "Not my will but THY will be done! Whatever happens, Lord, be with me!"

The month of May is one of two months dedicated to Mary, the Mother of God. We honor her this weekend with the traditional May Crowning. We welcome the Active Christian Women's Club who are here for their Corporate Communion, and we welcome any members of the Pope Pius X Council of the Knights of Columbus who also are in attendance.

On May 1st, we celebrate the Feast of Saint Joseph the Worker. Personally, I celebrate the anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. 39 years this year, and looking forward, God willing, to my ruby, 40th, anniversary next year. Established in 1955 by Pope Pius XII, this special feast day gives all who labor a protector and an example to follow. Falling on the first day of the month dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, "May Day" is meant to highlight the dignity of labor and bring a spiritual dimension to all of our work, so that our labors -- even the most menial -- are done for the praise and glory of God.

Working with patience and joy to provide for his Holy Family, Saint Joseph offers for us an example of the demeanor and spirit with which we, too, should complete our work; be it that of our employment or our everyday household chores.

Our work is meant to be a participation in the creative work of God; we are meant to be productive. We also do well to remember that great respect and honor need be given to the value and sacrifice made in the work of caring for the family. In this Year of St. Joseph, let us pray through the Intercession of Saint Joseph, the silent Saint, who watches over the Church and gives dignity to our human labors. I close, dedicating the rest of my priestly years, with this prayer, composed by Pope St. Pius X, patron of our local Knights of Columbus Council:

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins;

to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations;

to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God;

to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials;

to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thy example, O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life and in death. AMEN. ALLELUIA!