



Bringing Home the Word

Fifth Sunday of Easter (B)
May 2, 2021

The Vine and the Branches Become One

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

Jesus himself picked the image of the vine to describe the reality of our being united to him and the Father. And this was not lost on early Christians. One of the first images they used to mark their graves was the vine and the branches.

An amazing thing about a vine and its branches is that you can't tell the difference between them. Look at a grapevine and try to determine which is the branch and which is the vine or trunk. You can't, since it appears as one seamless reality. Jesus invites us to be so

close to him that we appear to be just like him—"other Christs," as our name Christian suggests!

Second, the sap that springs from the vine, runs through the branches, and matures in the fruit is all the same. The life in Jesus and the life in us as Christians are the same. He has given us the same Spirit that animated him, the Holy Spirit.

This is why Jesus can guarantee that, if we remain in him by listening to his word and following his Spirit, we will definitely bear much fruit. His word and Spirit cannot remain sterile in us.

The most important result of being united to Jesus and bearing fruit is that not only will we be united to him in this life, but this friendship will last for all eternity. That's why early Christians put vines on their tombs. +

Sunday Readings

Acts 9:26-31

The Church...was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

1 John 3:18-24

Children, let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.

John 15:1-8

[Jesus said,] "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit."

*Jesus guarantees that,
if we remain in him by
listening to his word
and following his Spirit,
we will bear much fruit.*

A Word from Pope Francis

Let us not forget that the Our Father is the prayer of the poor. Our asking for bread expresses our entrustment to God for our basic needs in life. Everything that Jesus taught us in this prayer expresses and brings together the cry of all who suffer from life's uncertainties.

—First World Day of the Poor,
November 19, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- Do I find ways to regularly read and hear the word of God?
- What symbols would sincerely represent the way I live my life?

Beyond Gun Control

By Fr. Bruce Lewandowski, CSsR

Michael couldn't wait to tell his second-grade friend what had happened to him. "A policeman pointed a gun at my head this morning!" Michael's friend was scared, so he told the teacher, who told the principal, who called Michael's parents. His parents explained that their home had



been raided at 6:00 AM by federal agents, guns drawn. One had pointed a gun at Michael. An uncle living with the family had been arrested and charged with illegal sale of semiautomatic weapons.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops called for gun control in their document *Community and Crime: A Statement of the Committee on Social Development and World Peace*. That document was followed by *Responsibility, Rehabilitation, and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice*. It reiterated their support for legislative efforts to protect society from the violence associated with easy access to deadly weapons. Since then, the bishops affirmed their hope that any government action on gun-violence prevention would lead to greater respect for human life.

Like it or not, violence is part of our lives. Violent TV programs, video games, and movies are a source of entertainment

for many. War, insurrection, and mob scenes are reported on the news, in newspapers, and across the internet. Veterans are haunted daily by the trauma of battles fought decades ago, and thousands of soldiers continue to fight in conflicts around the world. Domestic violence is a reality for

many, and the tragedies of Littleton, Aurora, Columbine, Newtown, and Las Vegas have left an indelible mark on the American soul.

Even the Word of God is filled with violence—it can be found throughout the Hebrew and Christian Testaments. Prophets, priests, and kings are guilty of it; innocent and God-fearing men, women, and children are victims of it—and it's often attributed to God. Even our salvation was won through a horrific and violent act. We can't escape or explain violence away. It's a reality.

Our society encourages and celebrates overindulgence. People overeat, overspend, overwork, overachieve, overcommit, overdose, and overreact. It seems a bit like overkill to say this—but if you can name it, you can indulge in it.

Many turn to gun control as a remedy, and maybe there should be stricter government oversight of the availability and use of firearms. But a

deeper problem exists, one much greater than uncontrolled access to weapons. The inability to manage powerful emotions and urges—the absence of self-control—can have life-threatening and life-ending consequences. Self-discipline and self-restraint are more than indicators of healthy and mature growth and development; they are imperative to saving lives and building and maintaining true and lasting peace.

As a nation, we've got a gun to our head—it's time to get control of ourselves. +

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PRAYER

Risen Jesus, your abiding presence gives us hope. Help me to be a loving presence to others.

—From *Hopeful Meditations for Every Day of Easter through Pentecost*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

May 3–8

Monday, Sts. Philip and James:

1 Cor 15:1–8 / Jn 14:6–14

Tuesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 14:19–28 / Jn 14:27–31a

Wednesday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 15:1–6 / Jn 15:1–8

Thursday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 15:7–21 / Jn 15:9–11

Friday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 15:22–31 / Jn 15:12–17

Saturday, Easter Weekday:

Acts 16:1–10 / Jn 15:18–21

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