

READINGS AND REFLECTION FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN EASTER

A READING FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES - ACTS 9:26-31

When Saul got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple. Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to Saul and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord. But after he had spoken to the Hellenists, and argued with them, they became determined to kill him. When the brothers knew, they took him to Caesarea, and sent him off from there to Tarsus. The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up, living in the fear of the Lord, and filled with the consolation of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of the Lord

RESPONSORIAL PSALM - PS 21: 26-28, 30-32

My vows I will pay before those who fear him.
The poor shall eat and shall have their fill.
They shall praise the Lord, those who seek him.
May their hearts live for ever and ever!
I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

All the earth shall remember and return to the Lord,
all families of the nations worship before him.
They shall worship him, all the mighty of the earth;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust.
I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.

And my soul shall live for him, my children serve him.
They shall tell of the Lord to generations yet to come,
declare his faithfulness to peoples yet unborn:
'These things the Lord has done.'
I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of your people.



A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF ST JOHN - 1 JN 3:18-24;

My children, our love is not to be just words or mere talk, but something real and active; only by this can we be certain that we are the children of the truth and be able to quieten our conscience in his presence, whatever accusations it may raise against us, because God is greater than our conscience and he knows everything. My dear people, if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience, we need not be afraid in God's presence.' Whatever we ask him, we shall receive, because we keep his commandments and live the kind of life that he wants. His commandments are these: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and that we love one another as he told us to. Whoever keeps his commandments lives in God and God lives in him. We know that he lives in us by the Spirit that he has given us.

The word of the Lord

Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord;
my branches bear much fruit. John 15: 4-5

A READING FROM THE HOLY GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN - Jn 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away - he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.'

The Gospel of the Lord

REFLECTION

Refer Michael Fallon MSC ([John 15,1 \(267-301\).indd \(mbfallon.com\)](#))

In our gardens, a vine's flowering and fruiting is affected when a branch fractures from the stem or is afflicted by disease. In our families also, we suffer heartache or the loss of the potential good for many when our relationships are fractured, infected or not cultivated.

Michael Fallon MSC, Scripture Scholar, writes that our communion with God is the foundation for our lives in Christ, for both our prayer life and for our participation in the mission of Jesus. With this foundation, our prayer and our mission can bear fruit, even beyond our awareness.

Autumn and winter are our seasons for some pruning in our gardens. In our spiritual lives, Jesus teaches us to allow ourselves to be "pruned" by the Word of God rather than by merely our own designs. The Word of God will challenge us (maybe with some pain). It is sharper than any two-edged sword and is alert to the thoughts and intentions of our hearts.

Jesus focusses not on the pruning but on our abiding in God. Jesus confirms that much fruit will be borne if we abide in him. Learning how God abides in us is a lifelong journey for us. It is not that we do nothing; our intelligence and capacities, wisdom and imagination, learning and moral character inform our responses. Let's not be afraid of our Vinegrower/Vinedresser. Let's pray and respond out of our communion with God, not out of our ego needs.

Trust God in our prayer. God responds to our prayer immediately though surely in God's way, maybe not in our way. Trust God who is there when we are ready for the grace God is offering.

On the road to Damascus, the Vinedresser found St Paul ready for the grace God was offering. As branches - connected to and nourished by the Vine - we too will be able to do all that is ours to do - through Christ who strengthens us.