



Homily Notes

May 3, 2015: V Sunday of Easter

Acts 9: 26-31; 1John 3:18-24; John 15: 1-8

Yielding Good Fruits

Today's scripture lessons emphasize the need for the Christians to abide in Christ as a condition to produce fruits of kindness, mercy, charity and holiness. The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles testifies to the abundance of spiritual fruit yielded by the apostles because of their bond with the Lord. It tells us how the Lord had pruned away former Saul, Saul who had persecuted the Church to produce a fruit producing branch called Paul and how Paul was entirely dedicated to the proclamation of the Gospel. Even Paul's forced return to Tarsus is an example of God pruning the vine to bring forth a greater harvest: the mission to the Gentiles. In his first letter John explains that only if we remain united to Christ, drawing strength from him, will we be able to obey God's commandment, especially the commandment of love.

John describes God as the vine grower who has planted a vine, Jesus. The Father removes every branch that bears no fruit and prunes the other branches so they may bear more fruit.

Jesus tells his apostles that they have already been pruned by the words he spoke to them. He refers to the announcement that he would soon be leaving them by his death on the cross. The apostles will not feel the full impact of this "pruning" until Jesus is actually taken away from them in death. Eventually they will be pruned of all attachment to the things of this world so that they may be ready to attach themselves to the things of heaven

We are pruned by our total identification with everything that Jesus stands for and by cutting out of our lives everything that is contrary to the spirit of Jesus. In our personal and corporate lives, there is ample evidence of the need for pruning. What will you choose to prune? This involves a kind of asceticism, a certain denial or controlling of our natural appetites, setting aside those non-Christ-like things gladly and willingly. Many unchristian things are weighing us down and, as branches of Christ the vine, we are at the risk of breakage from the weight. Lord prune us so that we may yield good fruits. -

Sibin Francis

May 10: VI Sunday of Easter

Acts 10: 25-26, 34-35, 44-48; I Jn 4: 7-10; John 15: 9-17

Laying Down One's Life

Jesus in today's Gospel explains precisely how the disciples are to remain bonded to him as branches to a vine. They have to obey his commandment of love just as he has done his heavenly Father's will by obeying His commandments and remained inseparably bonded with his Father. Jesus leaves us in no doubt about how much he loves us, and how we ought to love one another. He calls us friends, he tells us that he has chosen us, and, if we use his name, we can ask the Father for anything. In the first reading, Peter clarifies how God loves every one, both the Jews and the gentiles and wants every one to be saved through His son Jesus. Today's psalm also directs

our attention toward God's marvelous love and kindness in offering salvation to the whole world. In the second reading John defines God as love and explains how He expressed His love for mankind by sending His son to die for us humans "*as expiation for our sins.*"

Let us cultivate an abiding and loving friendship with Jesus: The qualities we normally expect from our friends are trust, faithfulness, equality, forgiveness, joy and sacrifice. Jesus invites us to have all these qualities in our friendship with him. i) Trust: Jesus trusted us by sharing with us everything that he has heard from his Father. All we have to do is trust in him as a friend by listening to him through the bible and talking to him by prayer. ii) Faithfulness: Just like a friend, we know that Christ will be always faithful to us. Let us return this fidelity by being faithful to him. iii) Equality: Christ has called us his friends, and therefore his equals. We are no longer his creatures, but his equals. Let us be proud of it and lead our lives worthy of our unique status. iv) Forgiveness: As an understanding friend he is ready to forgive us time and time again. v) Joy: As a friend, Christ has told us everything so that our joy might be complete in him. vi) Sacrifice: As he said in this passage: there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for a friend. He did it for us. **-Johnson S**

May 17, 2015: The Feast of Ascension of Our Lord

Act 1:1-11; Eph 1:17-23; Mk 16: 15-20

To Be Proclaimers of the Good News

"I am with you always; yes, to the end of time." Far from having left us on our own when he ascended into heaven, Jesus is closer to us now. He is with us at all times and in all places, releasing a new energy upon the earth, the energy of the Holy Spirit to preach his Good News of salvation by

bearing witness to him. The readings for the Feast of the Ascension remind us of this fact.

Today's first reading from the Acts describes the experience of the Ascension, the feast celebrating Jesus' ascent to the Father. It is not so much a change of location but a change of state of Jesus. From being on the earth with human beings he now is with his Father in heaven. Today's psalm, "*God is king of all the earth,*" celebrates God's universal kingship. In the second reading (Eph 1: 17-23), St. Paul exhorts the disciples to live in a manner worthy of their calling and mission. Our greatest witness to the presence of Jesus in our midst is our unity with God seen in our living with one another in peace and harmony.

In today's Gospel Jesus gives his final message, his final instructions, his final promise, and his final blessing to his apostles. Jesus gives his mission to all the believers: "Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature. This mission is not given to a select few but to all believers. To be a Christian is to be a proclaimer and an evangelizer. There is a difference between preaching and proclaiming. "*We preach with words but we proclaim with our lives.*" We are also reminded that Christianity is not for an elite group but is for everyone. No one is excluded and all are welcome. We are also reminded that while the Lord gives the mission to all, he does not expect us to rely only on our own resources to fulfill that mission. The mission is accompanied with the power that is given to all those called upon to fulfill that mission. **-Vanathu Antony**

May 24, 2015 Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-11; I Cor 12:3-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

Walking by the Spirit

Along with the Feast of the Passover and the Feast of the Tabernacles, Pentecost was one of the major feasts of the Jews. During these three great Jewish festivals, every adult

male Jew living within twenty miles of Jerusalem was legally bound to go to Jerusalem and participate in the feast. The word Pentecost literally means “Fiftieth,” because it was celebrated fifty days after the Feast of the Passover.

The first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, describes in detail, the miraculous transformation that took place during the first Pentecost. The disciples experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as it flooded them like parted tongues of fire. As a result of this experience, the frightened apostles were transformed into brave witnesses of Jesus, powerfully proclaiming Him as the promised Messiah-- the Lord and Savior of all mankind. In the second reading, St. Paul explains how the sharing of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit enriched the Church. Today’s Gospel relates how the resurrected Jesus conferred the Holy Spirit on His apostles by breathing on them, and how he gave them the power and authority to forgive sins.

Let us allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives.

i) By constantly remembering and appreciating his Holy Presence within us, especially through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. ii) By fortifying ourselves, with the help of the Spirit, against all types of temptations. iii) By seeking the assistance of the Spirit in our thoughts, words, and deeds; and in breaking our evil habits. iv) By listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the Bible and through the good counsel of others. v) By fervently praying for the gifts, fruits and charisms of the Holy Spirit. vi) By renewing our lives through the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Life in the Holy Spirit is a life of commitment, sacrifice and joy. It is a call to love as Jesus loved, not counting the cost. As Saint Paul exhorts us, “*Walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:16, 25). **Arun Vincent**

May 31, The Most Holy Trinity

Dt 4: 32-34, 39-40; Rom 8: 14-17; Mt 28: 16-20

Model for Christian Families

The first reading tells us that God is deeply involved in the world from its beginning, showing Father-like care for His people, setting an example that summons us to imitation. In the second reading, Paul describes the role of the Holy Spirit in making us true children of God the Father and brothers and sisters of God the Son, Jesus. Today’s Gospel describes Jesus’ final apparition to his apostles just before his ascension into heaven, commissioning them to make disciples of all nations. He instructs them that they should baptize those who believe in the name of each person of the Holy Trinity, namely, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

The solemnity of the Holy Trinity is one of the most important feasts in the Church. The doctrine of the Trinity underlies all major Christian feasts, including Christmas, the Epiphany, Good Friday, Easter, the Ascension and the Pentecost. All the official prayers of the Church, including the Holy Mass and the sacraments, begin with an address to the Holy Trinity: “*In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*” We are baptized, absolved of our sins and anointed in the name of the Blessed Trinity. Throughout the world, church bells ring three times a day inviting Christians to pray to God the Father (the provider); God the Son (the savior); and God the Holy Spirit (the sanctifier). We bless ourselves with the sign of the cross, invoking the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and we conclude our prayers by saying: “*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.*”

The Trinity is the model for Christian families: We are created in love -- to be a community of loving persons, just as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are united in love. Since the day we were baptised, we belong to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. How privileged we are to grow up in such a

beautiful family. Hence let us turn to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer every day. We belong to His family, the family of the triune God. The love, unity and joy in the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit should be the supreme model of our relationship in our Christian families. Our families become truly Christian when we live in a relationship of love with the triune God and with others. -Dino Varghese

**June 7, 2015: The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
(Corpus Christi)**

Ex. 24: 3-8, Heb 9: 11-15, Mk: 14:12-16, 22-26

Strengthening Unity and Love

Today, we celebrate the solemn feast of Corpus Christi. It is a doctrinal feast established for three purposes: 1) to give God collective thanks for Christ's abiding presence with us in the Eucharist and to honor him 2) to instruct the people in the mystery, faith and devotion surrounding the Eucharist, and 3) to appreciate and make use of the great gift of the Holy Eucharist, both as a sacrament and as a sacrifice.

The sacrament and the sacrifice: Jesus instituted the Holy Eucharist during the Last Supper as a sacramental banquet and a sacrificial offering. As a sacrament, it is a visible sign that gives grace. The Eucharistic Meal is a great mystery because during the Eucharistic celebration the substance of bread and wine are converted into Jesus' body, while their appearances (or 'accidents') remain. We believe in this transformation of bread and wine (called Transubstantiation) because Jesus unequivocally taught it and authorized his apostles to repeat it.

As a sacrament, the Holy Eucharist imparts to us Jesus' abiding presence in our souls. We share in His divine life, which is an assurance of eternal life and the conviction that we are children of God the Father. God shares His life with Jesus

and with all other people. In this sacrament, Jesus gives his own Body, broken for us on the cross and his precious Blood poured out for us in order that our sins might be forgiven. Thus, the Holy Eucharist is a sacrifice as well as a sacrament. By means of signs, symbols and prayers, it is the bloodless repetition of Christ's death. It is a reenactment of His sacrifice on the cross, and a memorial repeated at every Mass. It assures us of Jesus' love for us, and His forgiveness of our sins. Besides, it is the sacrament of our union with Him. Through this sacrifice, the risen Jesus becomes present on the altar, offering himself to the Father through the ministry of the priest.

The Eucharist, (the body and blood of Christ) teaches us the importance of community, the bond of love that results from this sacrifice. Just as numerous grains of wheat are pounded together to make the host, and many grapes are crushed together to make the wine, so we become unified in this sacrifice. Our Lord chose these elements in order to show us that we ought to be united with one another in sharing, sacrificial love and to transform ourselves into Our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the head and we are the body. Together we are one. That which unites us is our willingness to sacrifice our time and talents for our fellow members in Christ's mystical body. This is symbolized by our sharing in the same bread and the same cup. Hence, Holy Communion strengthens our sense of unity and love. -Arun Vincent

June 14, 2015: Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Ez 17:22-24; 2Cor 5:6-10; Mk 4:26-34

Surrendering Ourselves to Jesus

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the second popular catholic devotion, the first being the rosary. The infinite love and mercy of God is shown in many different metaphors and symbols. First of all, his undeserved mercy is shown in the fact of the Incarnation: God so loved the world that he gave

his only Son who became one of us. The primitive Church expressed the love of Christ in the symbol of the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. The symbols of this love vary from age to age. The Medieval Period used the symbol of the crucifix which showed the tortured body of Jesus. In the seventeenth Century, the symbol of the Sacred Heart of Jesus began to be used. The Sunday after Easter has been designated by Pope John Paul II as Divine Mercy Sunday: This commemorates the lavish and undeserved love of God.

An invitation for heart transplantation

Our hearts become stony and insensitive by our daily exposure to acts of cruelty, terrorism, injustice and impurity. Hence God prescribes a change of heart through His prophet Ezekiel (Ez 11:19-20) to make our hearts soft, elastic. Large and sensitive:” *I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies, and replace it with a natural heart, so that they will live according to my statutes, and observe and carry out my ordinances; thus they shall be my people and I will be their God.*” The sacred heart of Jesus should be the ideal heart for this medical procedure. “Learn from me I am meek and humble of heart.” Let us have the heart of Jesus.

An invitation to love

Sacred Heart of Jesus challenges us to love others as Jesus loved: selflessly, unconditionally and sacrificially and expressed as humble and loving service done to others. We are invited to return the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the same coin, by imitating his life, by doing reparation for sins and by consecrating and surrendering our lives to Jesus.

Vibin Varghese

June 21, 2015: XII Sunday of the Year

Job 38: 1, 8-11; II Cor 5: 14-17; Mk 4: 35-41

The Boat of Our Life

The role of God in calming the storms of life is the central theme of the readings for this *Storm Sunday*. The first reading tells us how the Lord speaks to Job whose life was devastated by storms of illness, death of the dear ones and total loss of possessions. “*Out of the storm*” God reminds him that He is in control. Today’s responsorial psalm picks up the storm theme and tells us how the Lord saves the sailors caught up in the high waves of a tempest by “*hushing the storm to a gentle breeze.*” “*They who sailed the sea in ships...saw the works of the Lord and His wonders in the abyss.*” The second reading explains how Jesus died for us to make us a “*new creation*” and so we have to respond to his love by living for him in all situations of our lives. Today’s Gospel reminds us to keep Jesus in our life’s boat and to seek his help in the storms of life.

Accommodate Jesus in the boat of your life. All of us are making a journey across the sea of time to the shore of eternity. Hence it is natural that occasionally we all experience different types of violent storms in our lives: physical storms, emotional storms, and spiritual storms. We face storms of sorrow, doubts, anxiety, worries, temptations and passion. The storms we encounter in life are often what makes us or what breaks us. These storms can either bring us closer to God and one another or alienate us from God and others. But only Jesus can still these storms. Jesus can give us real peace in the storm of sorrow. When we are totally depressed with sorrow Jesus assures us of the glory of the life to come. Jesus consoles us at the loss of our dear ones with the assurance of eternal life for our loved one in the heavenly home of God the Father where we too will reach one day. When the storms of doubt seek to uproot the very foundations of the faith, Jesus is there to still that storm revealing to us his divinity and the authority behind the words of the Holy

Scripture. Jesus gives us peace in a tempest of doubt and tension and uncertainty provided we humbly submit to Jesus' guidance. He gives us peace in the storms of anxiety and worries about ourselves, about the unknown future and about those we love. Jesus calms the storms of passion in people who have hot hearts and the blazing temper. **-Jesuraja**

Fernando

June 28, 2014: XIII Sunday of the Year

Wis 1: 13-15, 2: 23-24; I Cor 8: 7, 9, 13-15; Mk 5: 21-24, 35-43

Call to Health, Wholeness and Holiness

The healings in today's Gospel reveal Jesus as a person who willed that human beings should live life fully. These healings also demonstrate the kindness and compassion of Jesus. The Gospel describes two of our Lord's miracles, the healing of a chronic disease and the revival of a young girl who was dead. They also give us further proof of the divine power and the infinite mercy of our Savior. In the second reading, St. Paul asks the Corinthian Christian community to show the same kindness and compassion to their Jewish brothers and sisters by raising a fund for them. The first reading suggests that such acts of loving kindness will help us to share the eternal life God has prepared for us.

Let us all accept God's call to health, wholeness and holiness. All of us, in some way or another, are constantly in need of God's healing. "Healing," "health," "wholeness," and "holiness" are linked words in English. We pray for healing which will give us health in every aspect of our lives-- not just in our bodies, enabling us to function in perfect harmony with people around and with the environment. Part of our healing depends also on the wholeness of our communities, a wholeness which is based on truth, love, compassion and a deep sense of justice for all. Let us pray to Jesus as Lord of life and ask him to help us reach that level of health, wholeness and holiness to which he is calling us.

Have trusting faith in the mercy and divine power of Jesus:

The primary condition for the effectiveness of our prayer is our faith in the goodness and mercy of God. Such a faith is possible only if we remain related to God through prayer, the sacraments, and meditative study of the Bible. Every day we should say a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of active faith. Let us keep in mind this wise piece of advice given by St. Ignatius of Loyola: "We must work as if everything depends on us, but we must pray as if everything depends on God." **-Arun Chakkalackal**

(Due to lack of space, the regular Book Review Section is regrettably omitted in this issue)