

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2021

Reflections by Sister Judith Murphy, OSB

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

Good morning! Today we are three weeks away from Pentecost. The Easter liturgical season is rich with layers and echoes// from the celebration of the Triduum and Easter, threads that allude over and over to the centrality of the events we celebrated then: the renewal of Baptismal promises; gratitude for the Eucharistic table//and its centrality in our lives, and the context for our lives of faith -- pivotal sacramental moments which we celebrated in Holy Week and Easter.

The collect prayer today reflects on this reality:// Gracious God, we ask that you accomplish within us the Paschal mystery--as you continue /to renew in us Holy Baptism--, that under your care /our lives may reflect our brother Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection to new life,//that we may bear much fruit --and we may come to enjoy the fullness of life,// through your Son and our brother Jesus, // in the unity of your Spirit.

Today's readings are like a video news report// of the development of the early church// and a reflection on the foundation this new creation offers us //for us to become.

The author of Acts writes of the early church growing from the Jewish matrix of Jerusalem toward being worldwide, //as wide as the world was perceived to be in those first centuries. / And John probes the Christians' sense of themselves/...of ourselves-- in being and becoming daughters and sons of God: *Let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.*

We recall that early historians were impressed by what they saw in the believers: See how they love one another!

John offers us in the gospel reading //the image of the vine and the branches, to describe our relationship with our loving, gracing God, as we are grafted onto-- Jesus the true vine// and God is the vine grower.

When I began to prepare this reflection, I looked at today's selection in **Give Us This Day**, that monthly booklet that gives us the daily Scriptures and more. Today there is a reflection by Michael Casey called ***Fruit of the Vine***. Casey laments there that sometimes **religion** seems to get *hijacked* by moralists, ... that sermons get reduced to be more like moral exhortation// than **proclamation of good news**,// that it is sometimes hinted that we or others ought to pull up our moral socks,// which Casey doesn't dismiss, but //rather he says:// A perfect moral life is NOT the foundation of Christianity, //although it may be its ultimate goal, something we may reach about ten minutes before we die.

The essence of Christian life, Casey says,// is the **good news** of *our being grafted into Christ*, //allowing the true vine's energizing sap to circulate through our veins// so that all our thoughts, words, and deeds are progressively upgraded,// and we become more Christlike.// It is a slow process, to be sure, but eventually it yields fruit,// and continues to do so for as long as we remain on the vine.// In other words, we are **not the source of our own virtue**; it is **all gift**, all gift in the grace given for us by the one loving God. **There is the good news.**

And so we pray,//Loving and gracious God,// continue to make us new// that we may bear fruit //and come to the joys of the fullness of life.