

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we begin the fifth week of Easter. Our Scripture readings of the past four weeks gave us inspiring and challenging thoughts, calling us to be Easter people. Easter people are called to go on into the uncertain future trusting that the risen Lord will meet them on their journey, to trust in the mercy of God and to be merciful just as our heavenly father is merciful, to be filled with God's peace and be channels of his peace for the world and to be vigilant and watchful just as the Lord is as our good shepherd.

Today, the fifth Sunday of Easter calls us to be fruitful and reminds us that our fruitfulness as disciples of Jesus depends on our connection with Jesus our master. Our first reading tells us that the early Christians experienced fellowship in Christ which helped them to overcome their fears of persecution and give witness to Christ and care for one another. It was their union with Christ that enabled them to accept Saul the persecutor who had become Paul the missionary, the proclaimer of the good news of Jesus. The second reading of today tells us that those who are in Christ and those in whom Christ remains must love one another in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed. If our love is real, in word and in deed, we know that God is in us and with us, the spirit of Jesus lives in us and that our hearts are pure. This enables us to be fruitful in Christ by being caring, compassionate, loving and generous people!

In the Gospel reading of today, Jesus offers us the beautiful image of the Vine and the branches to reflect on our oneness in him and how that oneness enables us to be fruitful as his disciples. Fruitfulness of the branches of the Vine depends on their union, their connection with the Vine. Just as the branches become fruitful only in the Vine, we become fruitful only in Christ, in our union with him. We must live in his spirit to bear fruit and give a witness of our life in the world.

The Vine itself does not bear fruit. The Vine bears the branches and feeds the branches, and the branches bear the fruit. This means that we must constantly be fed by the "word" of Jesus and the "bread" of life and "cup" of compassion that Jesus offers. Enlightened by His word and nourished by the Eucharist, we will be fruitful in giving witness to our Christian life. The second reading of today from the first letter of St. John tells us that those who are in Christ and those in whom Christ remains must love one another in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed. If our love is real, in word and in deed, we know that God is in us and with us, the spirit of Jesus lives in us and that our hearts are pure. This enables us to be fruitful in Christ by being caring, loving, compassionate, and generous people! This will be the fruit and the sign of our communion with Christ and community.

To read more of this Sunday's reflection, please click on the link below...

Fruitfulness of the Vine also depends on the branches being cleaned, pruned, and trimmed. Wild branches do not yield. They become unyielding and unproductive. In just the same way, we must be cleansed, pruned, trimmed, disciplined, controlled, tamed, and directed so that we may bear much fruit and bear witness to Christ. We must remain open to being cleansed, pruned, trimmed, disciplined, controlled, tamed, and directed. We must welcome the pruning process of the heavenly father to yield the fruit that the heavenly father wants us to yield.

I remember reading the story of an Anthropologist playing a game with the African tribal Children. He placed a basket of candy under a tree and let the children stand 300 feet away. Then he announced that whoever reaches the basket first would get all the candy in the basket. When he said "get, set, ready, go", the children held each other's hands, ran together towards the tree, picked up the basket, divided the candy equally among themselves, ate and enjoyed the candy. They ran together, they had fun and they enjoyed the candy...they celebrated the fruits of journey together.

When the anthropologist asked them why they did so, they answered, "Ubuntu", which meant, "How can one be happy when the others are sad?" "Ubuntu" in Shona language means, "I am because we are." It expresses the idea that being a person involves being part of a web of connections...relationships. We are interdependent beings...dependent on God and on one another. As Thomas Merton says, "No man is an Island." We are called to shape our future together as a community of brothers and sisters in Christ. As St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "Together we live and together we die" (2 Corinthians 7:3).

We need to be together in Christ to face the manifold challenges of our world. We are now in the midst of cultural, political, racial as well as religious conflicts and tensions. Our unity as a nation and as a Church is disrupted and threatened as well. It is urgent that we recognize our need to be together as one nation and one community in Christ. We must strive to not only appreciate others for what they are, but also live in a way that they can appreciate us as well. Let us strive to bring that sense of "Ubuntu", "I am because we are" into all our relationships. Let us learn to appreciate and accept cultural, political, racial as well as religious diversities and allow diversities to be our strength. Diversity makes us beautiful and respect for diversity makes us strong.

Our Gospel reading today reminds us that Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches and our fruitfulness depends on our living in him. Our togetherness in Christ is what makes us fruitful as disciples of Jesus and our connection to one another is what helps us share the fruits of our life and find joy and peace. Let us take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on the quality of our connection to Christ and others in our community and on living in his spirit to bear fruit and give witness of our life in Christ.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 28, 2024

**Every believer in this world of ours must be a spark of light, a center of love, a vivifying leaven amidst his fellow men. And he will be this all the more perfectly, the more closely he lives in communion with God in the intimacy of his own soul.
(Pope John XXIII)**

Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
constantly accomplish the Paschal Mystery within us,
that those you were pleased to make new in Holy Baptism
may, under your protective care, bear much fruit
and come to the joys of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Dear Lord, grant us the gift of forbearance so that we may offer ourselves and each other space and time to correct our mistakes.

Acts 9:26-31

The experience of fellowship which the early Christians enjoyed helped them to overcome their fears of persecution. They were able to accept Saul the persecutor who had become Paul the missionary, the proclaimer of the good news of Jesus.

This experience challenges us to put our confidence in the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church.

The same Spirit, who empowered the early Christian community and brought a radical change in the life of Saul/Paul, continues to be with us. The Spirit blows/moves where the Spirit wills and continues to reveal God's truth through the most surprising people, events, and situations.

Be alert, awake and docile to the Holy Spirit! May the Holy Spirit bring you into fellowship with others!

Pray for unity in diversity, respect for others, communion of cultures, harmony in the universe!

Psalm 22

This Psalm is a lament, unusual in structure and intensity of feelings. Present distress is contrasted with God's past mercy (1-8); remembers surrounding enemies (9-21); praises God (22-30) and closes with a universal praise of God (31).

This is an important psalm in the New Testament. The opening verse is found on the lips of Jesus on the cross (Mark 15:34; Mathew 27:46) and several other verses are quoted in the accounts of the passion of Jesus in Mathew 27:35, 43 and John 19:24.

Verse 1 introduces the psalm as "The deer of the dawn", which is a note to the leader or the choir master. It is a suggestion to sing the psalm according to the tune of "The deer of the dawn", a tune unknown to us. Just imagine a lonely deer, cut off from the rest of its herd, standing alone at dawn, gazing into the distance in the hope of discovering its friend at last.....Use your imagination as you pray!

**I will fulfill my vows before those who fear the Lord.
The lowly shall eat their fill;
They who seek the Lord shall praise him:
May your hearts live forever!**

1 John 3:18-24

The author of this letter tells us that those who are in Christ and those in whom Christ remains must love one another in spirit and in truth, in word and in deed.

If our love is real, in word and in deed, we know that God is with us, the spirit of Jesus lives in us and that our hearts are pure.

Be loving, compassionate, caring, gracious people! May this be the sign of your communion, intimacy with Christ!

John 15:1-8

I am the vine, you are the branches.....remain in me, you will be fruitful.....you can do nothing without me.....

Reflecting on our oneness in Christ, this Gospel passage offers us the image of the vine and the branches. Fruitfulness of the branches depends on their union, connection with the vine. Fruitfulness also depends on the branches being trimmed, pruned, and cleaned. We could rephrase it to read "fruitfulness depends on being tamed, disciplined, controlled, directed, channeled, etc. – wild branches do not yield.... they become unyielding!"

The branches become fruitful only in the vine. Abide in Christ....be united with him.... live in his spirit.....you will bear much fruit!

The vine itself doesn't bear the fruit. Vine bears the branches and feeds the branches, and the branches bear the fruit. Be constantly fed by the "word" of Jesus and the "bread" of life and "cup" of compassion that Jesus offers. You will be fruitful.

Be open and docile to the Holy Spirit! Be open to being pruned, trimmed, cleansed, disciplined, tamed.....be docile to the pruning process of the heavenly father...wild branches become unyielding! Be yielding...Be fruitful!

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, April 28 – St. Peter Chanel and 17 other saints are remembered this day.

St. Peter Chanel was born on July 12, 1803 in the hamlet of La Potière, France. From about the age of 7 to 12 he worked as a shepherd. The local parish priest persuaded his parents to allow

Peter to attend a small school the priest had started. After some local schooling, his piety and intelligence attracted the attention of a visiting priest from Cras, Fr. Trompier, and he was put into Church-sponsored education at Cras in the autumn of 1814. He made his first communion on 23 March 1817. His interest in the missions abroad began when he read letters from missionaries to America sent back by Bishop Louis William Valentine Dubourg. In 1819 he entered the seminary at Meximieux where he won several awards and class prizes in Latin, Christian doctrine and speech.

Peter Chanel was ordained a priest on July 15, 1827 and spent a brief time as an assistant parish priest at Ambérieu-en-Bugey. At Ambérieu he also read letters from a former curate from that parish who was at that time a missionary in India. There he met Claude Bret, who was to become his friend and also one of the first Marist Missionaries. The following year, Chanel applied to the Bishop of Belley for permission to go to the missions. His application was not accepted and instead he was appointed for the next three years as parish priest of Crozet, which he revitalized in that short time.

Peter Chanel's zeal was widely respected, and his care, particularly of the sick in the parish, won the hearts of the locals. During this time, he heard of a group of diocesan priests who were hopeful of starting a religious order to be dedicated to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Wanting to be a missionary, he joined the Society of Mary, the Marists, at the age of 28. He taught in the seminary for five years. Then, as superior of seven Marists, he traveled to Western Oceania. The bishop accompanying the missionaries left Peter and a brother on Futuna Island northeast of Fiji, promising to return in six months. He was gone five years.

Meanwhile, Peter struggled with this new language and mastered it, making the difficult adjustment to life with whalers, traders, and warring natives. Despite little apparent success and severe want, he maintained a serene and gentle spirit, endless patience and courage. A few natives had been baptized, a few more were being instructed. When the chieftain's son asked to be baptized, persecution by the chieftain reached a climax. Father Chanel was clubbed to death on April 28, 1841. Within two years after his death, the whole island became Catholic and has remained so. He was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1954. Peter Chanel is the first martyr of Oceania and its patron.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**People judge you by your actions, not your intentions.
You may have a heart of gold, but so has the hard-boiled egg.**