

CELEBRATE EASTER

Fifth Sunday of Easter

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!

Psalms 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 (Mk.15:34; Mt.27:46) and several other verses are quoted in the accounts of the passion of Jesus in Matthew 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!

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

