

Fifth Sunday of Easter



Jesus said to his disciples:

*"I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vine grower.
He takes away every branch in me
that does not bear fruit,
and every one that does he prunes
so that it bears more fruit.
You are already pruned because of the word that I
spoke to you.
Remain in me, as I remain in you.
Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own
unless it remains on the vine,
so neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me and I in him
will bear much fruit,
because without me you can do nothing.*

As people in recovery, there is no question that we must go through a pruning process to realize the healing power of God. The passage above is from the first part of Sunday's Gospel Reading, taken from the 15th chapter of John's Gospel. The message is clear: remain in Christ.

Within the first few steps of recovery, we admit that we are powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments then invited to surrender our will and lives over to God's care. This is not always as easy as it sounds, particularly when our thoughts turn to things that are not of Jesus. These thoughts influence our beliefs, especially as they relate to hope for a brighter future or freedom from the substances and behaviors that kill us. Remaining in the belief that God can and will relieve us of our addictions may require changing the way we think and view the world.

Let us not forget that along with the command to remain in him is the promise that Christ remains in us. What we go looking for we go looking with. Finding opportunities to identify God living within us can radically transform who we are, what we think, and how we behave.

A humble confidence begins to grow—not in our own abilities but in the Spirit of Christ that dwells within us. Relying on a New Power to keep us free, we can recognize that same Spirit in others and can approach relationships differently. We begin to see the fruit that God bears through us, which allows us to endure the pain that comes along with pruning.

The darkness of addiction does not have the final say. Whatever defeats we are facing in our life is not the end of our story. Our God, in Whom we put our hope, is a God of life and not of death. This is told through the Resurrection of Jesus which we continue to celebrate through the Easter season. Just beyond the horizon is new life and new joy waiting to bloom as we remain in Jesus.

Working through the Twelve Steps of addiction recovery provides a solid foundation for remaining in Christ, developing healthy spiritual practices, and allowing God—the vine grower—to prune us. As we look inward and take personal responsibility for our lives, we find God waiting to assume the responsibility of salvation.

Sunday's Gospel Reading concludes:

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

When we make a willing and honest effort toward spiritual growth, we can be sure that God's glory will be shown to us and revealed through us. It requires our trust and commitment to Him. We can carry a message of hope confidently and boldly, telling our story to cultivate our identity as beloved children of God. In Him, we can expect to bear fruit abundantly.

Reflection Questions

- How do you interpret and live out Jesus' command to remain in him?
- How have you been pruned through recovery and working the Twelve Steps?
- What fruit has been born because of your recovery and commitment to a life of faith?

Attend a CIR Retreat in 2024

There are several retreat opportunities around the country this year to strengthen your recovery and faith

- Hear inspiring testimonies, attend meetings, engage the sacraments, participate in workshops, and more!
- Dedicated time for quiet meditation and fellowship
- Remaining 2024 retreats include Portland, OR (full); Hanceville, AL; Wichita, KS; Fort Wayne, IN; San Diego, CA; Subiaco, AR
- For more information and to register for a retreat visit catholicinrecovery.com/events

Sunday Mass Readings this Week

First Reading: Acts 9:26-31

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 22:26-27, 28, 30, 31-32

Second Reading: 1 John 3:18-24

Gospel: John 15:1-8