

Fifth Sunday of Easter – I am the true vine



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Introduction

The most frequent way of praying that Saint Ignatius uses is that of imagining ourselves in a Gospel scene. We imagine ourselves as a character in the story. We take part in the story, seeing Jesus and all the other people, being aware of what's going on and how we are feeling. The purpose of praying with the imagination is to allow Christ in the Scripture to speak to us. To bring the Gospel stories to life for us. We are not trying to recreate history. It doesn't matter if your imagination takes the story off in a different direction to the Scripture. It doesn't matter if the story takes place in 1st century Palestine or where we live now in the 21st century. What is important is what God wants to say to us through this passage.

Sit and relax by focussing on your breathing for a few minutes so that you can contemplate the Gospel using our imagination.

Prayer

Acknowledge you are in the presence of God by saying the following prayer:

Direct O Lord and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer: all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings; my hopes and desires; may all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in your Spirit. Amen

Let the Spirit guide and enlighten my mind as we read the Gospel and reflect on the intimacy of our relationship with Jesus as we ask for the grace to bear much fruit.

Reading John 15:1-8

Jesus said to his disciples
'I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vine dresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes
to make it bear even more.
You are pruned already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to you.
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
but must remain part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.
Anyone who does not remain in me
is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers;
these branches are collected and thrown on the fire,
and they are burnt.
If you remain in me and my words remain in you,
you may ask what you will and you shall get it.
It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and
then you will be my disciples.

Contemplation

On this, the Fifth Sunday of Easter, the Gospel Passage comes from the long discourse which Jesus has with his disciples during the Last Supper. It is one of the many “I am” statements made by Jesus throughout St John’s Gospel. Last week we heard Jesus telling us “I am the Good Shepherd”; during the week we heard him telling us “I am the bread of life,” In this Gospel passage, Jesus tell us “I am the true vine”. So with this in mind, let us enter the scene and find a place within it.

- Who are you within the story? Are you one of his disciples? Perhaps a person that is not specifically mentioned in the printed story?
- What is the room like where you are listening to Jesus’ discourse? Is it small? Large? Homely? Austere? Are you sitting? Standing? Are the chairs comfortable? Hard?
- What time of day is it? Morning? Noon? Evening?
- What is the atmosphere in the room like? Do you feel peaceful? Attentive? Argumentative? Confused? Tired?
- What is going through your mind when Jesus says, “I am the true vine and my Father is the vine dresser”? Do you feel on familiar territory because vines are very common in Palestine and you understand the work that goes into cultivating a vine or any other fruit tree for that matter?
- Do you feel happy that the Father loves you so much that he wants to “cut away any of the branches that bears no fruit”? Do you feel the careful tending of the Father whose gifts to us are multiplied many fold by his careful pruning? Do you know the branches in your life that need lovingly pruned so that your fruit can multiply? Do you allow God to create and multiply in you, your gifts and qualities of love and service to others? Do you accept the loving attention of the vine-dresser?
- How do you feel knowing that Jesus is the vine and your are one of the branches? Do you feel that intimate relationship with Jesus? That the closeness of the relationship with ourselves and Jesus is like branch and tree? Do you feel that life giving force flowing from him and into your veins – a force of loving and healing? Do you feel this force bear fruit in

you – fruits of love, compassion, ministry, acts of kindness, service to other?

- Jesus says “If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it”? Do you find these words a life giving force? Do his words touch your heart and soul? Do you find consolation in them? Do they make you feel at home with Jesus?
- Do you realise that we are all God’s children so are all one of these branches. The same sap, the same life giving force, that comes from the vine, runs through all of our veins? That we are all connected to each other by that life-giving force? That because of this, we all have a responsibility to each-other?
- Do you realise we all have the capacity to bear fruit in some unique way? That we are gifted in a way no-one else is? Do you recognise in yourself your unique gifts? Do you realise they come from God? Do you give thanks to God for them? Do you realise God is always labouring to ensure a healthy plant, a healthy you? Can you recognise where the vine-dresser is specifically cultivating you?

Feel what is going on inside you as you listen to Jesus’ words. Is there anything you want to ask him? Approach Jesus and talk to him about what is going on inside you. Give thanks for your unique gifts.

Let us now spend ten minutes in quiet contemplation

End Prayer Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.